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A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ADVISORY PROGRAM

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

William S. Shipp

March 2021

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ADVISORY PROGRAM

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my family who have been a constant support of encouragement through this journey. I'm grateful for my mother, Diane Shipp, a longtime educator, who encouraged me to begin this adventure, who has never stopped telling me what she thinks I need to do, who enjoyed hearing about my courses even more than I did at times, and who traveled along with the family for the many trips to Williamsburg. To my son, Collin, and daughter, Ainsleigh, of whom I am so proud, for enduring the many trips to Williamsburg, and for their support and for constantly asking me, "So Dad, when are you going to be done with your dissertation?" And to my lovely wife, Alison, my constant companion, source of encouragement, voice of reason, I am eternally grateful to enjoy each day with you by my side.

And lastly, to my father, Gerald, a teacher and longtime high school principal, who passed away before I began my career. I am grateful that I had 24 years with him. He provided love, guidance, and counsel that even to this day I still consider when facing difficult decisions, "What would Dad do?" Thanks, Dad.

Acknowledgments

My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Peggie Constantino for her wisdom, guidance, and support. She epitomizes all that a distinguished educator and leader should be. Also, to my committee members, Dr. Michael DiPaola and Dr. Jennifer Parish for their honest feedback for me to delve deeper into my study. And to my cohort whom I dearly miss the summer classes and the monthly weekend classes where we engaged in formidable discussions on our profession and craft.

To my colleagues, students, staff, and communities at Park View High School (1995-2000), Harper Park Middle School (2000-2012), and Woodgrove High School (2012-present) for helping me become the educator and school leader I am today.

Also, a special thank you to all the participants of this study.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the quality, relevance, benefits, and teacher preparedness of a student advisory that was implemented in a high school to improve student connectedness to the school. Students and staff perceptions and ideas were collected and analyzed for the purpose of understanding whether the advisory was meeting its stated goals and for the purpose of providing guidance for the next phases of the advisory. One year of extant student and staff surveys were collected and a focus group with staff were held to elicit their thoughts, perceptions, and ideas of the advisory program and whether the advisory achieved its short-range outcomes of increasing student connectivity to the school. The results indicated students want a more engaging and purposeful advisory with relevant lessons that provide them the opportunity to meet other grade level students in the school. Teachers provided similar feedback regarding the mixed grade levels and relevance, however, teacher respondents also shared more positive insights for the advisory program, compared to students, indicating it was on a purposeful trajectory.

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ADVISORY PROGRAM

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The complexities of a high school environment are significant and the stresses on students, teachers, and parents considerable. A key variable to the success of students in the high school setting is the degree to which they feel connected to their school (Blum, 2005). A growing body of research is finding that students who feel more connected to their school are more likely to be well adjusted socially, emotionally, and academically more successful (Osher et al., 2009). In addition, students who feel as if the adults in the school know them and care about them are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009a). Students are more likely to be successful in school if school personnel create a safe and inclusive environment for all students (CDC, 2009b; Osher et al., 2009; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Graduation rates, extracurricular involvement, discipline, attendance, and academic achievement are all affected by student connectedness or the lack thereof (Blum, 2005). Most often, students who feel they do not have a connection with their school can move through the hallways of the school for years and ultimately graduate, or not, without a significant event.

This has been true in schools for decades as Keith (1971) shares in *The Silent Majority*. However, since the publication of this work, unfortunately, when some students do not feel that binding tie with their school community, the outcomes can be tragic. Research is indicating that school connectedness matters not only for academic achievement but also for social and emotional well-being. Whether due to bullying, emotional distress, suicidal ideation,

discrimination, or another factor, already in the 21st century, more people have been killed in school shootings than were killed in schools in the entire 20th century (Springer, 2018). Cox et al. (2018) reported that over 215,000 students have faced gun violence at school since the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999. Tragically, 141 students, teachers, and others have been killed and 287 have been injured during this time, with 16 being the median age of the school shooter (Cox et al., 2018). In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook School Shooting, Cornell et al. (2013) emphasized that schools, rather than alienating at-risk, disengaged, or violent students, must rather actively pursue and foster positive relationships with those students to help them become more meaningfully connected with their school community.

Even more recently, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the closure of schools nationwide. With the CDC encouraging social distancing to help curb the spread of the virus and many states implementing stay-at-home provisions, students' in-person interactions with their friends, teachers, and school communities abruptly stopped. As schools grapple with how to reopen safely, proponents of opening the schools not only advocate for the opening for academic reasons, these proponents urge the opening of schools for the psychological well-being of the students as well (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020). In its *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*, the American Academy of Pediatrics states, "Schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits" (AAP, 2020). Harvard Public Health professor, Karestan Koenen, indicated the current crisis has increasingly affected people's mental health with 19% of a Kaiser Family Foundation survey indicating that the pandemic has had a "major impact" on their mental

health (Powell, 2020). Furthermore, Koenen noted the threat to children's mental health well-being and encouraged consistent routines and structure for them (Powell, 2020). At the time of this writing, it is still relatively early in this pandemic crisis; however, as additional research and data become available, these early indicators from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Harvard support the importance of schools and student-school connectedness.

In addition, more research is now being conducted regarding vulnerable groups and under-represented groups, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) student population. These studies are presenting stark differences between LGBTQ students and their peers about how they feel about their school connectedness, how they perform academically, and their lack of attendance when compared to their non-LGBTQ peers (Day et al., 2018). These students are demonstrating a significant increase as targets of bullying, higher rates of suicidal ideation and depression, increased absenteeism, and greater academic difficulties (Almeida et al., 2009; Day et al., 2018). In their study of over 7,000 seventh- and eighth-grade students, Birkett et al. (2009), found that 15.1% were either questioning their sexual orientation or identified as LGB. With such a significant number of students experiencing negativity in schools, schools must consider actions to ensure all students have access to a positive school climate and opportunities to positively connect with the school (Birkett et al., 2009).

Since 2000, numerous educational studies have been conducted regarding schools and to what degree student connectedness to the school plays a part in each student's academic success, emotional and social well-being, and the overall culture of the school (Blum, 2005). Schools in which students feel connected typically have higher graduation rates, lower discipline problems, and are perceived as being safe (Blum, 2005; Gray & Hackling, 2009). However, with the

heightened focus on student academic achievement during the last several decades, schools and school districts have tended to focus on student academic performance and not on other student needs or their connectedness to the school (Dellamora, 2009). The idea of focusing solely on academics and not on the whole student has left many schools, high schools especially, in dire circumstances. Throughout the nation, the high school dropout rate has decreased over the past forty years, yet the sole focus on academics continues to be a concern (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Additionally, school safety is often in question as school shootings continue to occur across the nation. And whereas statistically, it is unlikely that a school will ever have a shooting (Brock, 2015; Cornell, 2014), the effect of one school shooting, due to the widespread and constant media coverage, ripples throughout the nation causing increased stress for students, teachers, and parents (Grenny, 2012).

Research provides a clearer picture of what schools and districts can do to be more preventative and increase student connectedness. Gregory et al. (2012) found that under the Authoritative School Climate Theory, that is, those schools with high academic expectations, and high emotional support for students, were less likely to have increased incidents of violence, truancy, and fewer dropouts. In their study of Virginia ninth-grade students and teachers, Gregory et al. (2012) found that schools that were responsive to students' needs, and which provided a helpful and supportive environment in which school rules were perceived, by students and teachers, as being administered consistently, were more positively associated with both increased student connectedness, and teacher safety and satisfaction.

Student Advisories

Considering the complexities of the school environment, a strategy schools have implemented in an attempt to create a safe and positive academic environment in which all

students feel connected to the school is student advisories. Student advisories are programs implemented in schools to improve and enhance the relationships students have with their teachers and peers (Poole, 2003). The intent is to provide students with a sense of community, caring, and connectedness to the school. Student advisories, when implemented effectively, can be the leading positive influence on a school's culture (Johnson, 2009). Students who are in successful advisory programs are more apt to perceive their school positively, become involved in extracurricular activities, and graduate on-time (Lampert, 2005). Successful advisory programs vary and are created to meet the needs of a specific school. Implementing an advisory program simply to do so, or copying an advisory program from another school, are not effective strategies for success (Walloff, 2011).

This study evaluates one high school's student advisory program that has been implemented to enable all students to feel connected to the school. Specifically, the study will evaluate program outcomes and stakeholder perceptions of the program's merit.

Statement of the Problem

In 2010, Mountain Springs High School opened to accommodate the student population growth the community was experiencing. The school is part of a large school district, which has experienced rapid student population growth for the past two decades. By 2010, the year of Mountain Springs' opening, the district had 11 high schools. Most of the newer high schools opened in the central or eastern portions of the county where the population growth was more rapid. The school boundary for the western part of the county, which encompasses half of the geographic territory of the county, was served by just one high school until 2010. Mountain Springs, which was supposed to open in 2004, was delayed due to legal disagreements regarding land use with the nearby town and the school board. Due to Mountain Springs' delayed opening,

the existing high school became overcrowded and it became necessary to limit it to Grades 10, 11, and 12. Students in Grade 9 attended school with eighth graders at an intermediate school. Upon the opening of Mountain Springs, ninth graders were once again placed in the high school. Thus, Mountain Springs offered the opportunity to reestablish a high school environment for all its students.

In the fall of 2010, Mountain Springs opened with approximately 1,000 new students and 150 staff members. As part of the important process of creating a new school, Mountain Springs attempted to create its unique school climate and culture. However, the school experienced leadership changes in the first 2 years of operation, and by the fall of 2012, in its third year of operation, Mountain Springs had its third principal and a number of new staff members. Students and staff were still attempting to create a climate and culture in the school. As part of the ongoing process of creating a desirable school environment, Mountain Springs implemented a student advisory to improve student connectedness and school climate. The problems to be investigated in this evaluation study are program outcomes and stakeholder perceptions of the program's merit. This study focused upon short-range outcomes of the advisory in Mountain Springs High School and provided school leaders with information regarding possible benefits of the program to participants and any modifications the advisory needed.

Mountain Springs is the least ethnically diverse high school in the district regarding students. Most recently, Mountain Springs administered nine tests to ELL students for a state writing assessment. In contrast, another high school in the district administered over 450 such tests. One of the stated beliefs of the school's mission statement is "We believe that we must be responsible for achieving our own goals, for contributing to society, and for being effective global citizens of the world around us." The school's core belief aligns with the district's core

belief of “an inclusive, safe, caring, and challenging learning environment serves as the foundation for student growth” (Loudoun County, 2014, p. 1). The school faces a challenge of providing a global education in a school community that does not reflect the diversity of the community in general and the world at large. The school is striving to prepare its students to be globally and culturally aware.

Recognizing that the school does not have an ethnically diverse student population, the student-staff advisory committee was created as a goal for the school to increase student connectedness, teach global awareness, and improve the school’s climate for all students. Before advancing with the advisory implementation, an Equity team, initially consisting of staff members and later students and parents, was formed for moving the school community forward with regards to student connectedness. The purpose of the Equity team was to gather information through student, parent, and teacher climate surveys to determine the needs of the students and school. The team met weekly. Given the unsettled beginning of the school regarding leadership, the school’s staff also needed time to work with each other and establish coherence before working with students. The staff participated in professional development focusing on the importance of professional peer relationships as well as teacher to student and student to student relationships. The staff was trained on aspects of how to create connections with all their students. To do so, during the school’s fourth year of operation, Gary Howard (2002), author of *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*, was hired as a consultant and worked with the school on professional development to help teachers identify potential biases and how to teach and connect positively with students from diverse cultures. In addition, staff received training on how to incorporate different cultural perspectives into their lessons.

Through the work of the Equity team, the staff was informed that the student advisory would begin with the goal of improving student connectedness and the school climate. Staff members also were informed that the advisory would not start until the school's fifth year of operation. The focus for the fourth year was on the staff and building their capacity to create meaningful relationships with each other and their students. At the end of the fourth year and the beginning of the fifth year, staff members were trained by district staff on circle training. This technique, typically used for restorative practices, was introduced to staff as a strategy they could use with their advisory students to help them become engaged and feel secure within the group. This training was led by the district and school-based social workers and school psychologists. The basic form of a circle includes all participants facing each other in a circle. A question is posed, or a topic discussed, with participants being provided the opportunity to share their thoughts. There is no judging of or specific commentary directed to another participant's remarks. If a student chooses to not say anything, that is fine, and they may pass on commenting. Bayne and Horton (2001) explain the basic components of a circle:

1. (Participant) Either says something about how they are or something that's happened or is going to happen—something personal—or says "pass."
2. Is fairly brief (usually up to about a minute).
3. Listens but does not comment on what anyone else says, either at the time or later.

There is an exception to this guideline: sometimes someone says 'Like Julie (say), I feel...' This is fine. The spirit of the guideline is to avoid evaluating, rescuing, or empathizing—at least not in spoken words—and such links do not contradict this spirit, at least not usually or seriously. (p. 16)

Wachtel (2016) shares that circles provide participants with the chance to share their perspectives while also building trusting relationships and a sense of community in an environment that promotes “safety, decorum, and equality” (p. 7).

The student-staff advisory was implemented at the beginning of the second quarter of the 2014-2015 school year. The advisory began with 123 mixed grade-level groups with a school staff member, licensed and classified included, as an advisory leader. Each group had twelve to fourteen students. The school’s Equity team created lessons based on school climate surveys, discipline statistics, and cultural competency lessons derived from Gary Howard’s work. A clearly stated objective was included for each lesson. Lessons included relationship-building activities, communication strategies, self-advocacy lessons, and cultural awareness activities. The advisory completed its fourth year of implementation.

Program Description

FACETIME is the student advisory that Mountain Springs High School currently implements with its students and staff. The acronym, FACETIME, stands for Foundations, Awareness, Change, and Evolve, and was created by staff members who were members of the school’s Equity team. The purpose of FACETIME in Mountain Springs is “to further develop student and staff relationships, increase school connectedness and help foster a positive school climate.” The advisory program meets weekly. A FACETIME bell schedule is followed on the days the advisory meets. Twenty-five students and two adults are assigned to each advisory for a ratio of 12.5 students to each adult. At the beginning of the school year, teachers are provided with the calendar of lessons for the advisory for the year. Then, weekly, on Mondays, teachers receive a reminder email with the lesson for the week attached. When the advisory meets, teachers present the objective of the day to the students. Lesson topics vary as do the activities

for each lesson (see Appendix A). Teachers receive professional development training on strategies to engage students, such as seating arrangements and circle training, at the beginning of the year and throughout the year during faculty meetings. Teachers may select strategies they believe will work best for their advisory. Some teachers have students move their desks into a large circle, other teachers have students form smaller groups, and other teachers have students sit in rows.

At the end of each school year, students and staff are surveyed regarding their thoughts and experiences with FACETIME. From these results, and other gathered data such as discipline and attendance, FACETIME topics are determined for the upcoming year (e.g., bullying, cultural awareness, mental health resources, substance use). Key components supporting student connectedness with the school include student to adult relationships, student to student relationships, student cultural awareness of self and others, student respect and empathy for others, and student engagement in the school. Each of these elements frames the FACETIME advisory.

Context

This student-staff advisory was implemented in Mountain Springs during the school's fifth year of operation. Each year, the advisory met weekly through the 2019-2020 school year. For the 2020-2021 school year, the advisory began meeting daily due to a district-wide requirement and schedule that was created for all high schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The school is predominantly White, with 84% of the students identifying with that classification. Four percent of the students identify as Black, 4% as Asian, and 8% of students identify as Hispanic. Seven percent of students receive free or reduced-priced lunch. The school's attendance boundary is the largest in the district comprising 166 square miles. For

comparison, other high schools in the district have attendance boundaries of 4.9 and 5.0 square miles. Given the schools location, all students must either ride a bus to school or they provide their own transportation. No students are designated as walkers to the school. For the first several years, the school's attendance was one of the lowest amongst the high schools in the district. Student attendance continues to be a focus for the school with a three year average of 94.45%.

Description of the Program

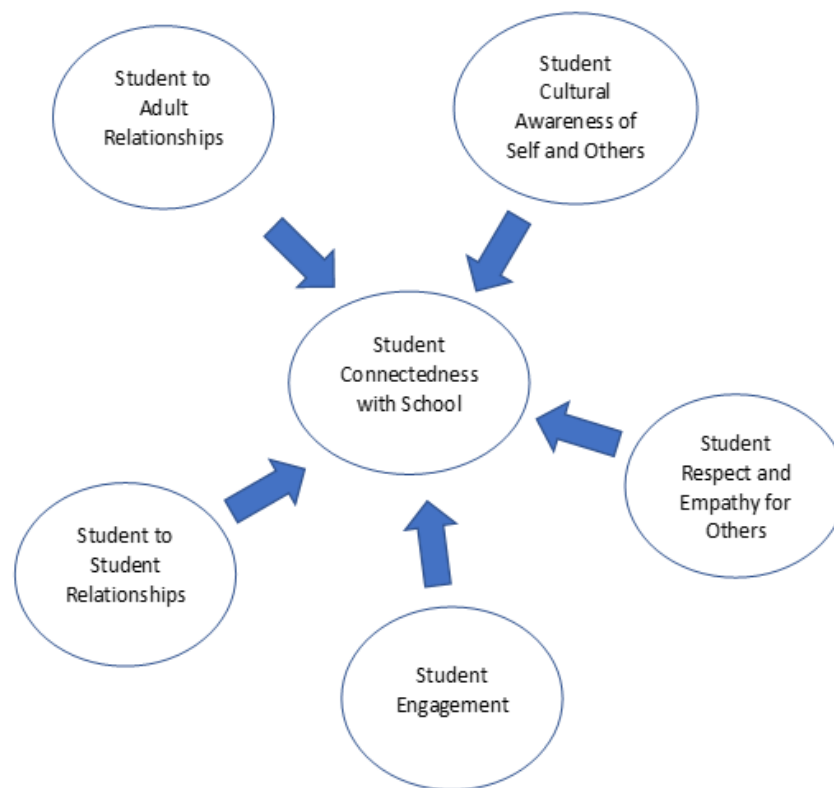
The FACETIME program is based on four phases in relationship building: "Foundations, Awareness, Change and Evolve." Before launching the advisory, the Equity team, initially using information gleaned from the work with Gary Howard and the school climate surveys, created lessons for each session the advisory would meet. Students and staff meet weekly to discuss the lessons. As the program has evolved, student leaders have taken on a more significant leadership role both in planning the lessons and leading the groups. Figure 1 depicts the concept model for FACETIME.

To plan the FACETIME lessons, student, teacher, and parent surveys, school climate surveys, and discipline statistics are reviewed and used to provide direction for lesson topics. Also, the team used other outside resources such as Mike Smith's *The Harbor*, which is part of Jostens Renaissance Education. This program provides video educational resources that "facilitates the teaching of character development in classrooms by showcasing tangible life lessons through a school years' worth of episodes with real, raw and engaging video content" (Smith, 2016). Before using the resource, students and teachers from the Equity team traveled to hear Mike Smith's message to see if it aligned with the mission of the school's FACETIME which they believed it did. *The Harbor* video lessons were then incorporated and aligned with lessons for FACETIME. Once the lessons are complete, at each monthly faculty meeting, staff members

are instructed on upcoming lessons and provided opportunities to discuss and ask questions regarding the lessons. In the FACetime meetings, teachers and student FACetime leaders meet with their advisory groups and present the topic for the day. All groups throughout the building discuss the topics in small group settings providing opportunities for all students to share their thoughts. Most often, all groups follow the same lesson for the day, however, variations may occur especially if the lessons are created for specific grade levels. Student participation is encouraged; however, it is acceptable if students choose to remain quiet and listen.

Figure 1

Concept Model for FACetime



The advisory meets weekly for approximately 35 minutes. The school operates on a specific bell schedule created especially for the day's FACETIME meeting. All students, and the majority of staff, both licensed and classified, participate in FACETIME. All students and most staff members are assigned to a FACETIME group at the beginning of the year. Students are placed into grade level advisories and remain with their advisor through their time at the school. It is the intent through this year to year looping that the students and adult advisors will create meaningful relationships providing the students with a trusted adult in the school.

An observer of a FACETIME lesson should see the teachers greeting students as they enter the classroom. Once the roll is taken for student attendance, teachers present the advisory lesson to students. The lesson objectives are shared both orally by the teachers and visually on a classroom whiteboard, interactive board, or other devices. Teachers then check for understanding to ensure students know the planned activities and expected outcomes. The advisory lesson then begins.

An effective advisory has all students and staff members attentive and engaged in the day's lesson. Teachers provide guidance, if necessary, for the advisory to stay on topic. The type of student engagement with the advisory will depend upon the nature of the day's lesson. Students may engage with one another, in small groups, or in a large group. Teachers speak to all students at least once during each lesson. Appropriate pacing of the lesson enables the advisory to move through the entire lesson efficiently, including all learning objectives.

Professional Development. In the spring of each year, FACETIME surveys (see Appendices B and C) are given to students and staff to gather their thoughts and opinions regarding FACETIME. From these surveys, the Equity team, student leaders, and parents meet at the end of the school year and review the survey results.

With the survey feedback and concept model in mind, the team of teachers, students, and parents then work together to craft lessons for the upcoming year. Depending upon the determined needs, resources available within the school or district may be used. The team also will research outside resources that may be available. The team will meet over the summer, and working with school administration, determine the schedule and dates for FACETIME for the upcoming year. Then, so that the lessons are coordinated and may scaffold upon one another, the lessons and dates are established. The team also takes into consideration other significant school-wide events that can be supported in the FACETIME setting such as the school's annual mental health wellness walk or fair.

In August, when staff return for the upcoming school year, they are provided with a half day FACETIME training, led by both staff and students. Staff members also are provided with a FACETIME booklet detailing each lesson (see Appendix A). In this training, the spring FACETIME survey results are shared with staff as are the lessons which were created based on the survey and other data results. Staff members participate in abridged FACETIME lessons and are instructed on how to engage students in an advisory setting. Circle strategies are again taught and refreshed to returning staff by the school's social worker and psychologist. New teachers receive a more in-depth training at the school based new teacher orientation.

Each FACETIME group also has a student leader who helps facilitate the lesson with the adult. These FACETIME student leaders also meet monthly with staff leaders on the Equity team to discuss upcoming lessons, and, at times, present to staff at monthly faculty meetings. Then, at the beginning of each school week, an email is sent to staff members with the upcoming FACETIME lesson and any other pertinent directions. If any additional supplies are needed for a

lesson, such as markers, poster board, etc., those materials are placed either in the teachers' mailboxes on the FACetime day or in the mailroom where they are easily accessible.

Overview of the Evaluation Approach

This program evaluation will adhere to the pragmatic paradigm. Mertens and Wilson (2012) state,

As the word “pragmatic” comes from the Greek word meaning “to act,” it makes sense that evaluators test the workability (effectiveness) of a line of action (intervention) by collecting results (data collection) that provide warrant for assertions (conclusions) about the line of action. (p. 90)

This program evaluation will provide an assessment of short-term outcomes to determine the benefit to participants and provide feedback to stakeholders responsible for program implementation. The findings will inform key stakeholders as to the alignment of outputs and activities with identified outcomes and allow for data-driven decisions regarding program improvement. This evaluation will utilize a mixed methods approach to gathering both qualitative and quantitative data.

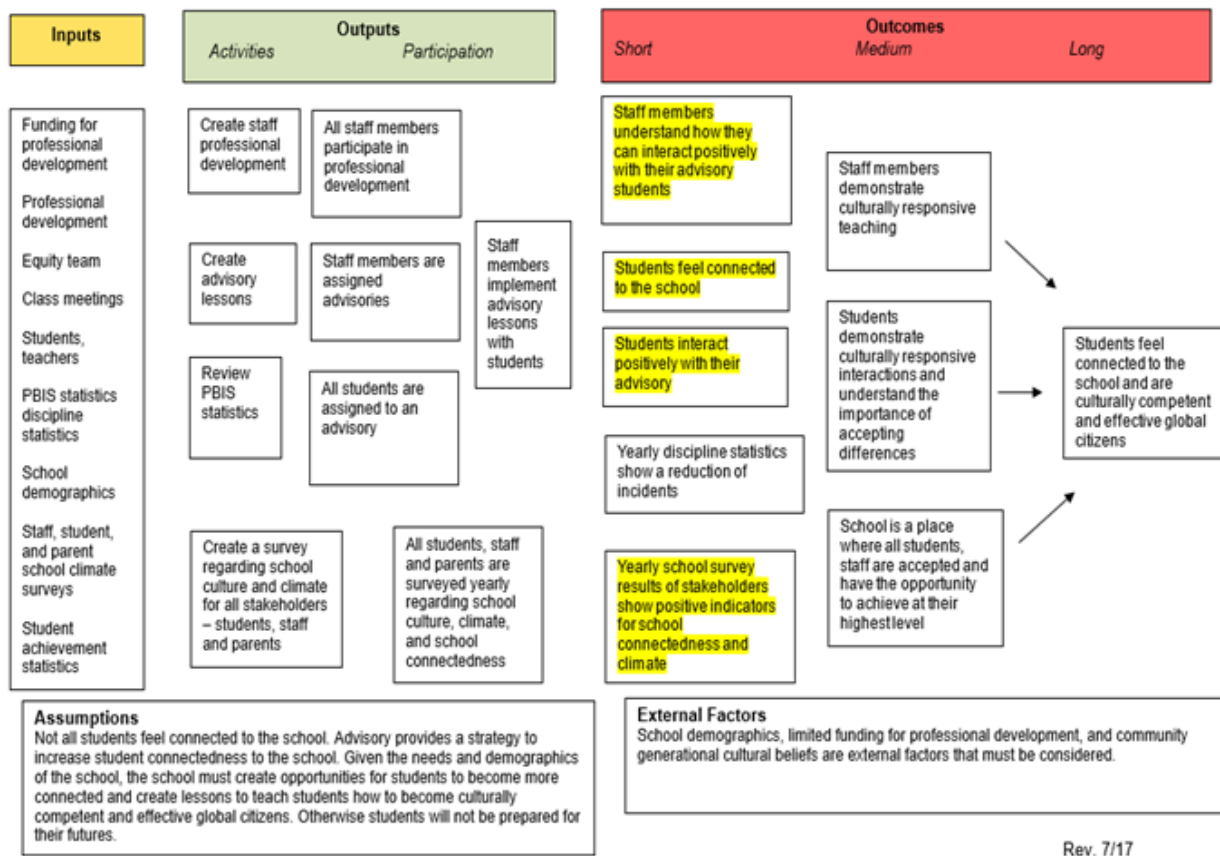
Program Evaluation Model

This study will adhere to the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) model of evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2001). The CIPP model provides a framework by which a program may be evaluated at any point of its implementation (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Since the advisory at Mountain Springs is in its sixth year, it is appropriate to evaluate its short-term outcomes. The program has not been in place long enough to provide substantive evidence that mid-range and long-range outcomes are being achieved. However, the CIPP model does provide evaluators with

the structure to evaluate a program at any point along the continuum of the logic model. Figure 2 depicts the logic model for FACetime.

Figure 2

Logic Model for the FACetime Advisory Program



In addition, the evaluation will adhere to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) to ensure it meets the necessary measures for utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy standards (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

Program Inputs

The inputs for this advisory program are those resources that have been dedicated to

assisting with the implementation of the advisory. In the logic model, inputs include: students, staff members, funding for professional development, professional development with Gary Howard, as well as professional development provided by district staff on restorative circles, the school's Equity team, *The Harbor* video lessons. discipline statistics, attendance data, school demographics, climate surveys compiled by the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team, and student achievement statistics.

Program Outputs

Program outputs are categorized by activities and participation. Activities include the creation of staff professional development, the FACetime advisory lessons created by the Equity team, and the surveys created by the PBIS and Equity teams (see Appendices B and C). The August FACetime professional development as well as the professional development at monthly faculty meetings are activities that will be included. In addition, reviewing the FACetime spring survey results and the discipline statistics gathered by the PBIS team are included as activities. Reviewing FACetime survey data and schoolwide discipline data helps the Equity team create lessons for FACetime for the upcoming year. For participation, those staff members implementing the advisory, those students and staff members participating in the advisory, and those students, staff members, and parents completing the surveys regarding the advisory program are included as participants. In addition, those students, staff members, and parents creating FACetime lessons will be participants as well.

Program Outcomes

The program outcomes include short, medium and long- range outcomes.

Short-Range Outcomes. Short-range outcomes, which are those outcomes that are expected to occur during the school year, will be evaluated in this program evaluation. Through

annual school surveys and a teacher focus group, both students' and staff members' thoughts on the quality, relevance, and utility of the advisory program will be evaluated. At Mountain Springs, the expected short-range outcomes include staff members understanding how they can connect and interact positively with their advisory students while also helping students feel connected to the school. In addition, another short-range outcome is students will interact positively with their advisory teachers and fellow students.

Medium-Range Outcomes. Medium-range outcomes are expected within 2–5 years of implementation. Expected outcomes for the medium-range include students expressing increased connection with the school. Students also demonstrate an understanding of their own needs and well as those of their peers. Students and staff members have positive and meaningful interactions. Students feel as if they know their advisory teacher and students well. The school becomes a place where all students feel accepted and have the opportunity to achieve at the highest level they are capable. For Mountain Springs, medium-range outcomes include all students being accepted for who they are while also having access and opportunities to achieve at their highest level. Mountain Springs staff members demonstrate culturally responsive teaching and students demonstrate culturally responsive interactions with both teachers and peers.

Long-Range Outcome. The long-range outcome for this student advisory at Mountain Springs High School is for all students to become positively connected with the school and to be prepared to become culturally competent and effective global citizens. The long-range outcome is expected to be achieved by years 5–7 of the advisory. The highlighted areas represent the area of focus for the evaluation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this program evaluation is to provide information to Equity team members, PBIS team members, school leaders, and staff members regarding the student advisory and whether any modifications should be made to enhance the program's effectiveness. At this point in the program's implementation, it will be valuable for stakeholders to know if the outputs and activities are aligned with the intended short-term outcomes. The findings of this evaluation will inform key decision makers as they consider the program's value and benefit.

Focus of the Evaluation. The focus of the evaluation will be on the short-range outcomes of FACETIME and the thoughts on the quality, relevance, and utility of the advisory program that students and staff members have.

Evaluation Questions. Four evaluation questions that guided this program evaluation. These questions guided the evaluation and provide information for the next steps for the program. The questions were:

1. What are students' perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?
2. What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?
3. Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?
4. What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

Definition of Terms

Advisory – a period of time during the school day in which students, in small groups, meet with a staff member for the purpose of creating positive relationships with both students and the staff member (Cushman, 1990; Forte & Schurr, 1993).

Cultural Competency – “is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (National Center for Cultural Competence, n.d.)

Equity – used in this evaluation to indicate fairness for all students by providing each student what he or she may need to achieve academically, emotionally and socially in the educational setting (Howard, 2007). Mountains Springs’ Equity Team consists of teachers, parents, and students.

FACEtime – the name of the student – staff advisory at Mountains Springs High School.

Global Citizenship – a focus on “the unity and interdependence of human society, developing a sense of self and appreciation of cultural diversity, affirmation of social justice and human rights, building peace and actions for a sustainable future in different times and places” (Global Education Project, 2011).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports – “PBIS is an implementation framework for maximizing the selection and use of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices along a multi-tiered continuum that supports the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence of all students” (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021).

School Climate – a term used to express a school’s ability to create a positive academic, social, and emotional environment for all students while also fostering an environment where all students believe they can achieve (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, n.d.).

School Connectedness – “refers to an academic environment in which students believe that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals” (Blum, 2005, p. 16).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Students who feel more connected to their school are more apt to be well-adjusted socially and emotionally and academically more successful. Also, students who feel as if the adults in the school know them and care about them are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors (Klem & Connell, 2004). Students are more likely to be successful in school if school personnel create an inclusive environment for all students (Klem & Connell, 2004). For students to feel more connected to their school and to be more involved, schools have implemented advisory programs to address the needs of all students.

Student Advisories

Advisory is a time scheduled during the school day specifically to provide students the opportunity to foster a positive relationship with an adult and peers in the school (Cushman, 1990). Forte and Schurr (1993) define an advisory as:

An effective educational program designed to focus on the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, and ethical development of students; a program providing a structured time during which special activities are designed and implemented to help adolescents find ways to fulfill their identified needs; intended to provide consistent, caring, and continuous adult guidance at school through the organization of a supportive and stable peer group that meets regularly under the guidance of a teacher serving as advisor. (p. 117)

Recommendations for Advisories

Research indicates that such personalized learning leads to positive outcomes for students (Osofsky et al., 2003). For schools to successfully implement advisories, Railsback (2004) provides three guidelines for schools and districts to follow. The first is that the organization of the advisory must be sensible for the school environment (Railsback, 2004). Advisories can be implemented with a variety of themes and variations. However, not all of these are necessarily right for a particular school. The school must choose carefully the needs the advisory is going to address and base the components of the advisory from that analysis. Secondly, advisors must understand what their role is and what is expected of them (Railsback, 2004). The vision of the advisory and the framework for its function must be clear so that staff feel confident in the ability to follow the expected procedures. Thirdly, the advisory must have a specific goal or goals (Railsback, 2004). Having a set agenda and objectives provides all stakeholders, staff members, students, and parents, with a clear understanding of the purpose of the advisory. Wall (2013) provides recommendations for schools and principals that want to implement an advisory. An advisory team of teachers and administrators should meet to discuss the objectives and goals of the advisory. Visits to other schools implementing advisory should take place, however, the caveat to the school staff is to create their own advisory for their school and not to simply copy another school's model. Furthermore, schools must provide teachers with opportunities to discuss and ask questions about the advisory so that teachers feel comfortable with the advisory program. Ziegler and Mulhall (1994), based upon their study of an advisory program implemented in a Toronto middle school, also note six elements they believe to be necessary for a successful advisory. These components include:

- 6 months planning period before implementation,

- in-service program supported by staff with skills in team building, and including training in adolescent development,
- advisory group meetings daily,
- group size of no more than 15 students,
- students remain with the same advisor until graduation, and
- an advisory handbook for teachers to use as a resource. (p. 46)

Reflection also is a key component of a successful advisory (Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994). As Wall (2013) indicates, each school should create its own advisory and expect that modifications to the schedule or setup may occur which is a natural part of the advisory's growth.

Recommendations for School Leaders

Wall (2013) also provides recommendations directly for principals. Principals should participate in advisory groups. The visibility of the principal demonstrates support and encouragement for the program and helps foster its success (Marzano et al., 2005; Wall, 2013). In addition, the principal should model the advisory program for staff during faculty meetings or other such meeting times such as grade level or content level meetings. The principal must also be sure that time for the advisory is protected and not used for other purposes such as fire drills or other non-associated assemblies.

Student Relationships and Connectedness to Schools

Student advisories are not new to the educational setting and their effect on the school environment can vary (Cushman, 1990). School reformers have sought methods to personalize high schools during the last several decades (McClure et al., 2010). Much research has been completed on advisories indicating they can be a purposeful tool for increasing student

connectedness with the school. A well run and organized advisory can help foster the positive development of students' emotional, social, physical, and intellectual needs (Shulkind & Foote, 2009; Wall, 2013). Advisories provide students and staff opportunities to create relationships and opportunities to discuss topics which may otherwise not be discussed in content courses (Shulkind & Foote, 2009). These conversations help shape each student's own identity while also providing opportunities to listen to other ideas and perspectives from their peers. Conducted in a safe environment, advisories help facilitate understanding and empathy amongst students and staff (Wall, 2013).

Students feeling connected to their school are more likely to be actively engaged in the school community through extracurricular activities, attend school more often, make healthier lifestyle choices, and be engaged in classroom instruction, all of which are positively associated with higher academic achievement (Goodenow, 1993; McClure et al., 2010). Goodenow (1993) states:

Social acceptance and the sense of belonging are important throughout life (Maslow, 1962): Their absence often leads to lowered interest and engagement in ordinary life activities (Weiss, 1973). In schools, students from grade school (Batcher, 1981; Zeichner, 1978, 1980) through college (Tinto, 1987) have difficulty sustaining academic engagement and commitment in environments in which they do not feel personally valued and welcome. Such "belongingness" (Finn, 1989) or "school membership" (Wehlage, 1989) has recently been identified as the potentially critical factor in the school retention and participation of at-risk students. (p. 80)

In addition, the CDC (2009b) identified six strategies for helping students feel more connected to their school environment. These strategies are:

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement; academic achievement; and staff empowerment;
- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life;
- Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school;
- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment;
- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents;
- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

Nationwide, efforts have been made to reduce the size of high schools so that the educational setting is more personal. Organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates and the Carnegie Foundation have invested millions of dollars to help school districts reduce the sizes of their high schools (McClure et al., 2010).

Cushman (1990) found that effective advisories helped students feel as if they mattered. In addition, the structure of advisories can be very different with each variation having the potential to provide positive results (Cushman, 1990). However, advisories that do not meet frequently enough, once every 2 weeks or less, do not provide the necessary time for students and teachers to foster meaningful relationships (Chaffee et al., 2012). Research also indicates that schools that avoid tracking their students into either college or vocational tracks help

students have greater connectivity with those schools (Blum, 2005). Literature reinforces that it is not the class size that matters most with students' connectedness, but rather the effectiveness of the teacher (Stronge, 2010). In addition, Blum (2005) states, teachers, and schools can connect with their students by:

- avoiding separating students into vocational and college tracks,
- setting high academic standards for all students and providing all students with the same core curriculum,
- ensuring that every student has an advisor,
- providing mentorship programs,
- ensuring that course content is relevant to the lives of students,
- providing experiential, hands-on learning opportunities, and
- using a wide variety of instructional methods and technologies.

Osher et al. (2009) affirm the research supporting the association of schools with high levels of student connectedness with high academic achievement. Osher et al. (2009) also noted that schools that strive to effect change to a more positive school climate and higher levels of student connectedness also experience an increase in student achievement.

Importance of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

Significant research exists indicating students do feel more connected with the school when they have positive and respectful relationships with their teachers (Blum, 2005). Positive teacher-student relationships are often considered the base on which positive school experiences occur (Cook et al., 2018). Students who feel emotionally connected with their teacher(s) with feelings of belonging, trust, and connection demonstrate higher levels of achievement and emotional well-being (Cook et al., 2018). Additionally, this positivity and trust enables teachers

and students to engage in an enhanced heuristic educational process as students feel more comfortable taking risks and handling failure (Cook et al. 2018). Creasey et al. (2009) found that students who are less connected with their teachers demonstrate more anxiety and lower achievement when compared to those with students affirming positive relationships with their instructors. In their meta-analysis of 189 studies on teacher-student relationships on student engagement and achievement, Roorda et al. (2017) studied both primary and secondary students. Building on a meta-analysis by Roorda et al. (2011), Roorda et al. (2017) found that both positive and negative teacher-student relationships significantly affected student achievement and engagement. Those with positive relationships demonstrated significant gains in those specific classes while those showing negative teacher-student interaction also demonstrated significantly lower achievement and engagement. The authors noted the negative association demonstrated a stronger influence on student engagement than the positive association and indicated and reasoned that early intervention in negative teacher-student relationships is important to curtail to avoid more severe outcomes (Roorda et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Redding (2019) found that students of color, when taught by a teacher of the same race or ethnicity and who shared a similar culture background, “receive more favorable ratings of classroom behavior and academic performance, score higher on standardized tests, and have more positive behavioral outcomes when assigned to a teacher of the same race/ethnicity” (p. 499). This was especially true of Black students.

Student to Adult Relationships

Student-teacher relationships play a central role in students’ social and emotional experiences in school, particularly since these relationships impact students’ feelings about their connection and sense of belonging in their school environment (Cooper & Miness, 2014). When

asked why a teacher was their favorite teacher, students frequently say that the teacher sincerely cared about his or her students (Todd, 2018). Hattie (2009) found in his meta-analysis of student learning that positive teacher-student relationships have an effect size of .72. This effect size scores well within Hattie's zone of desired effects. Hattie's (2009) findings indicate that when students have a meaningful and trusting bond with their teachers, students feel more positive about school, feel safe to take risks, and come to understand that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Noddings (2003) found "A caring relationship with a teacher gives youth the motivation for wanting to succeed" (p. 12). Positive relationships with teachers can have a beneficial effect upon students, especially those that may be struggling, as these relationships provide encouragement and motivation (Collins, 2016). Conversely, students who do not have a positive adult relationship in the school tend to perform poorly academically and are at-risk of dropping out of school (Collins, 2016).

Student to Student Relationships

Peer relationships take on a more influential role in adolescent development especially in high school when adolescents are beginning to spend more time away from home and with their peers (Larson & Richards, 1991). Positive peer relationships can promote positive school engagement while also providing support and protection from negative experiences and circumstances (Moses & Villodas, 2017). Groves and Welsh (2010) found in their study with high school students in Australia that peer relationships were an important component of student success in the school. Whereas the students did indicate that peers could be a distraction, peers also provided encouragement and positive competition which caused students to strive to improve their academic performance (Groves & Welsh, 2010). Liem and Martin (2011) found in their study of 1,436 Australian adolescents that healthy peer relationships positively influenced

both academic achievement and self-esteem. In addition, the transition to high school for many students is a stressful time as they confront concerns about making or losing friends (Pratt & George, 2005). Numerous studies exist providing evidence that students use positive friendships to help successfully adjust to this transition to the secondary level (Keay et al., 2015). Peer relationships can also negatively affect student behaviors. Poteat et al. (2015) found in their study with 437 high school students that those individuals who were associated with homophobic and aggressive peer groups demonstrated and participated in increased homophobic behaviors beyond even what each individual perceived their own involvement to be. “Attention to the peer context is highly relevant because adolescence is a period during which peers exert a strong influence on individuals’ behaviors through group norms and ongoing interactions” (Poteat et al., 2015, p. 392).

Student Cultural Competency of Self and Others

Betancourt (2003) says “cultural competence is generally defined as a combination of knowledge about certain cultural groups as well as attitudes towards and skills for dealing with cultural diversity” (p. 560). With an increased globalized economy and the ability to travel open to most societies, intercultural interaction has risen dramatically (Günay, 2016). When meeting people from a different culture, individuals will value their own cultural norms and beliefs while also tending to perceive the other cultural beliefs as strange and disdainful (Günay, 2016). Moving from an ethnocentric viewpoint, where an individual believes their culture is superior (Bennett, 1993), to one of cultural competence, where cultural differences are recognized and accepted, is necessary if diverse individuals are going to work together effectively (Günay, 2016). Boutte et al. (2010) share “Teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching use cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally and

linguistically diverse (CLD) students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 3). When students feel valued and welcomed for who they are, students have improved academic and behavior outcomes (Hanover, 2014).

Student Respect and Empathy for Others

Empathy is “the ability to walk in another’s shoes, to escape one’s own responses and reactions so as to grasp another’s” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 98). Empathy is essential for knowing and relating to others and it plays a significant role in shaping positive social behaviors and social development (Barr & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2009). Everhart (2016) found that when students observed the emotional experiences of others, they learned more about other individual’s backgrounds and personal lives and experienced a heightened level of empathy for those persons. Empathy and understanding others allow one to move beyond an egocentric viewpoint and to understand the world through another’s perspective (Günay, 2016). Everhart (2016) notes that students experience a change in empathy when facing a situation that challenges their beliefs. This cognitive dissonance requires students to reconsider their beliefs to resolve the existing discord. Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) found that white students who had meaningful connections with people of color were able to better understand the detrimental impacts of racism on non-whites. In their study with white and minority high school students in South Africa, Swart et al. (2010) found that cross group friendships, those friendships that included both white students and minority students, were associated with “reduced intergroup anxiety, increased affective empathy, positive outgroup attitudes, greater perceived outgroup variability, and reduced negative action tendencies” (p. 326). Furthermore, the study supported the importance of multicultural education to provide homogenous communities with the opportunity to learn about other groups in a positive manner (Swart et al., 2010). Bojana et al.

(2016) indicated in their study of 646 high school students in Serbia that cognitive empathy and physical violence were negatively related among boys. Bojana et. al (2016) found that because of the boys' lowered ability to recognize others' emotions and perspectives, they engaged in threats and physical violence more often. The ability to empathize proves vital as it offers the possibility that one may change their perspective on something based on their understanding of the experiences of others. Barr and Higgins-D'Allessandro (2009) indicate that "When a school is more of a caring community, students' sense of connectedness and cooperation should also be stronger" (p. 765).

Student Engagement

Student engagement has been a focus for educators for over seventy years and its meaning has been modified over that time (Groccia, 2018). There exists substantial research regarding the positive influence student engagement has on student success in school (Rangvid, 2018). Generally, student engagement is the level to which a student is involved in the school academically and extracurricularly. Corso et al. (2013) state "student engagement is best understood in a way that recognizes student's internal thoughts and beliefs about being engaged, as well as their external experiences with the various aspects of school life (e.g., academic classes, co-curricular activities, socializing)" (p. 52). Buskist and Groccia (2018) cite Groccia's multidimensional model for student engagement which includes three levels: behavioral, affective, and cognitive levels. To provide a clearer picture of the extent of student engagement, all three of these levels integrate: with other students, in teaching, in learning, with the community, in research, and with faculty and staff (Buskist & Groccia, 2018). Buskist and Groccia (2018) propose that student engagement is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders of the academic community including administrators, teachers, and students. When students feel

valued and welcomed for who they are, students have improved academic and behavior outcomes (Hanover, 2014). Figure 1 (in Chapter 1) represents the conceptual model for the FACETIME program with a focus on student connectedness to school.

Implementing Advisory: Changing the School Culture

Mountain Springs High school did not have a student advisory in place when the school opened in 2010. The advisory was not implemented until the school's fifth year of operation. To transition to the student advisory, the focus of school resources had to change. Financial appropriations, professional development objectives, the school schedule, and faculty assignments all had to be adjusted or redesigned in order for the advisory to be integrated into the school culture.

Fullan's (2001) first component of leading change is to have a moral purpose. Student advisories have demonstrated an increase in student connectedness to schools. Student-teacher relationships improve, grades improve, and schools with advisories demonstrate reduced student suspensions (Wall, 2013). Implementing a student advisory can be a significant change for a school since it involves most stakeholders and a considerable amount of time. In recent years, a substantial amount of literature and research exist regarding implementing change in schools. Grover (2016) identifies three themes that must be addressed and considered for leading change: institutional barriers that may exist; particular components of the change to be implemented, relationships and transparency amongst stakeholders for how and why the change is needed.

Grover (2016) explains that time is a significant barrier to any change. School days are already filled with classes and other activities such as field trips and extracurricular activities. Crowding in another activity, such as advisory, can be viewed by teacher and students as just another have-to in an already busy day. To avoid such circumstances, Grover (2016) explains

that teachers' thoughts must be considered before implementation. In addition, the school or school system should avoid introducing too many new initiatives at once. Grover also states that if a change or intervention is to be introduced to the school, time must be dedicated to it so that the change or intervention can become part of the school culture.

The second point that Grover (2016) includes is the familiarity, or lack thereof, of the necessary components that must be included for the implementation to be successful. For an advisory to be successful, teachers and students must understand what it is and its purpose. In addition, training for staff must take place so that the program can be conducted consistently throughout the building. Grover (2016) indicates that failed implementation of programs often comes from not recognizing the new information, procedures, or processes that must be learned. In addition, teachers often only will implement those components or practices that they know. New components are not implemented if teachers have not received relevant training (Grover, 2016).

Lastly, Grover (2016) stipulates that stakeholders must have a mutual understanding of why a change or program is being implemented. Understanding that stakeholders may have different perspectives and rationale for implementing change may provide a shared understanding and strengthen the implementation process. In addition, as a program such as advisory is implemented, stakeholders' beliefs and practices may change and enhance the programs' development and growth.

Leading change is difficult and must be done with effective planning and a clear vision (Ewy, 2009; Holcomb, 2009; Kotter, 2015). Effective leadership comes not from a title, but rather the person's ability to mobilize people and inspire them to achieve goals established by the organization (Fullan, 2001; Northouse, 2016). To lead, a person must garner the respect and trust

of others. Followers must believe that the person they are following is leading them in a direction that will be beneficial for themselves and the organization. In addition, the leader must establish the reason for the change. To change solely for the purpose of changing will not galvanize the staff to support change. There must be a reason and a sense of urgency that unless the change occurs, then the current situation will not improve, or even worse, will deteriorate (Corbett, 2013; Kotter, 2015). In addition, it is imperative for a group of influential stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making processes for the change (Cooper et al., 2015; Kotter, 2015). A leader must be able to assess the current status of the organization and be able to convey and articulate a vision that teachers believe meaningful (Holcomb, 2009). Having a clear strategic plan for any successful organization is a non-negotiable (Ewy, 2009).

Kotter (2015) identifies eight processes that must take place for successful change to be implemented:

- Create – Sense of Urgency
- Build – Guiding Coalition
- Form – Strategic Visions & Initiatives
- Enlist – Volunteer Army
- Enable – Action by Removing Barriers
- Generate – Short-term Wins
- Sustain – Acceleration
- Institute – Change

As indicated, the implementation of the student advisory was a change for the study site. Before the school implemented advisory, the school spent a year, led by an Equity team made up of administrators, teachers, and an outside consultant, to lead and prepare the school for the

change. Data regarding student demographics, discipline statistics, and attendance rates were shared with staff to create the sense of urgency. In 2012, the study site had an absentee rate higher than only one other high school in the district and a suspension rate for drugs, alcohol, and tobacco that was elevated vis-à-vis other district high schools as well. The Equity team served as the guiding coalition for the school. By reviewing data and research on advisories, both by site visits and through research publications, the team could establish the vision and the initiatives for the advisory.

The Equity team then worked with other stakeholders in the school and asked them to review the plans and help provide additional input. The team, in order to remove any potential barriers, brainstormed possible consequences and unintended consequences of the change to the advisory. They found solutions or explanations for each issue brought forth. Once the school put into practice the advisory, the Equity team asked staff and students to share their personal reflections and experiences to highlight successes of the program. After years of implementation, the school expects to continue enhancing the program while also ensuring it becomes intertwined within the organizational construct of the school. However, concerns continue to exist with some aspects of the advisory and the school must also assess whether the program is being implemented per expectations.

Professional Development

Teachers wield significant influence on students and student achievement in schools (Stronge, 2010). Teachers are the most important factor of a successful student advisory program (Cole, 1994). Successful advisory programs center on the ability and capacity of teachers to both implement and convey to students a well-crafted advisory curriculum (Anfara & Brown, 2001). For teachers to develop as educators throughout their careers, they must continually receive

effective training on best instructional and assessment strategies (Moeini, 2008). The complexities (e.g., student academic, social, and emotional needs, federal and state requirements) that teachers face in today's classroom are significant, and leaving teachers on their own to navigate through these complexities could be considered errant thinking at its best, and educational malpractice at its worst. Schools and school districts must be vigilant in support of their teachers and their needs to effectively teach their students. Teachers must be able to adapt to changes and promptly acquire new skills to be most effective for their students (Boyle et al., 2004).

Effective professional development is based upon needs (Moeini, 2008). The professional development should include authentic environments in which teachers can have tangible experiences with their newly acquired knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Teachers who receive training in specific areas and then apply those new skills immediately with their students demonstrated significant student achievement gains as compared to teachers who did not receive the training or the opportunity to implement the newly acquired practices as quickly (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Consistency for effective professional development is necessary because inconsistent professional development, delivered in once-a-year trainings or conferences is rarely supported or sustained (Boyle et al., 2004). Professional development should be a career long expectation.

Challenges with Advisory

Not all educators or researchers believe the implementation of advisories are purposeful or help students feel more connected to a school (Cole, 1994). Even though there exists substantial and credible research indicating that advisories, when implemented with fidelity, do wield positive academic, social, and emotional results for students and the school community,

overall, there also exists research that indicates that advisories do not have the significant effect that educators believe. As Shulkind and Foote (2009) point out, there is limited empirical information indicating that advisories are effective. Also, because there are so many different variations of what a student advisory can be, identifying best practices for the advisory is difficult. Identifying what makes a specific or particular component of an advisory more successful than another is challenging to isolate and identify as well (Shulkind & Foote, 2009). However, one criterion that has been identified as bearing poor results occurs when the advisory does not meet often (Railsback, 2004). Schools that implement a student advisory for the sake of having one, without committing the time necessary for students, their peers, and the adults to foster meaningful relationships, will not achieve the expected results of the advisory (Chaffee et al., 2012).

Another problem with advisory is if there exists significant teacher resistance to the program. Van Hoose (1991) provided seven points why advisory programs are not supported by teachers:

1. Parents do not understand the concept and many may oppose it.
2. Many administrators are not really concerned about it.
3. Most teachers have had little formal preparation for service as an advisor.
4. Teachers do not understand the goals of the endeavor.
5. Advisory takes time—time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively in preparing to teach their subjects.
6. Some teachers do not want to engage in a program that requires personal sharing.
7. When TA (Teacher Advisory) begins with little staff development and leadership, teachers do not receive positive feedback from students.

If teachers do not believe they are equipped to be effective advisors, believe the time devoted to advisory is time wasted, or if they simply do not believe in the foundational principles of advisory itself, then the likelihood of any sort of success for the program, or importantly, increased connectedness for the students, diminishes dramatically. Unstructured time in a school rarely benefits anyone, and, if the expectations of the advisory are not explicit to all involved, then typically the advisory program will not serve any purpose with helping students.

Shulkind and Foote (2009) provide seven characteristics that an advisory must have to increase student connectedness:

- Strong advisories promote open communication.
- Strong advisors know and care about their advisees.
- Strong advisors closely supervise their advisees' academic progress.
- Strong advisors are problem solvers and advice givers.
- Students and advisors perceive that advisory directly improves academic performance.
- Students and advisors perceive that advisory functions as a community of learners.

The role of the teacher is paramount. Of the seven characteristics, three are specifically dependent upon the teacher and two other characteristics include the teacher and student. If the teacher does not embrace the program, the students will not either.

McClure et al. (2010) found that authentic classroom personalization was more influential on student achievement than structured student advisories. They defined personalization as “tightening connections between students and their learning environments” (p. 3). The researchers found in their study that the creation of a set time and agenda for an advisory period could create limitations on the student-teacher relationships compared to those that could

naturally take place in a classroom between student and teacher. Whereas personalization could take place both in the regular academic classroom setting and in advisory, students viewed the personalization taking place in the classroom as not as forced and managed as the student advisories. The rationale for why the advisory period was not found to be positively correlated with student success included poor implementation or that neither observations nor teacher surveys were conducted (McClure et al., 2010). The researchers noted these as a shortcoming of their study.

Although some researchers may indicate the difficulty in establishing a correlation with student advisories and student connectedness to schools, there does exist mounting research and evidence demonstrating that advisories do indeed have a positive effect on students' connectedness to school and their social, emotional and academic growth. In a study conducted by Klem and Connell (2004), schools that created a more personalized environment in the classroom (e.g., a high level of teacher support for students) showed evidence of increased student engagement in the school, higher attendance, and improved test scores. Both teachers and students indicated that increased teacher support for students had a positive effect on student outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004). The researchers pointed out that variables such as attendance and test scores were analyzed due to their positive association of likely post-secondary educational success and economic self-sufficiency and stability. In addition, the researchers found that students who identified schools in which they perceived lower teacher support also performed at lower levels when compared to students reporting higher teacher support. Advisories, when implemented appropriately, help students; however, the opposite may have just as powerful of an effect on students. If teachers are not highly involved as social, emotional, and

academic supports for their students, the effect on student success can be detrimental (Klem & Connell, 2004).

In a study on absenteeism of 70 middle school students, those students who were assigned to an advisory program demonstrated a significant decrease in absences (Simpson & Boriak, 1994). Also, Railsback (2004) found in her research that schools which foster a caring, and trusting environment have high rates of student achievement, attendance, and lower suspension rates. In addition, those schools in which students identify with at least one adult with whom they have a trusting and caring relationship demonstrate greater success with achievement, attendance and suspensions as well (Railsback, 2004).

Many schools' and districts' missions and goals are to prepare their students to become purposeful citizens in society. As research continues regarding the lasting benefits of a well-planned and implemented advisory, schools may want to consider implementing programs, such as an advisory program, that can demonstrate a significant influence on student success.

Summary

Currently, there exists limited research on the actual creation and implementation of advisories and the thoughtful and planned approach needed for a practical and successful introduction of the advisory into the school setting. Findings from this study could add to the current literature on school advisories and help provide information pertaining to the creation, introduction, and successful implementation of a teacher-student advisory. This in turn might provide future researchers information on implementing a schoolwide advisory while also, importantly, providing current practitioners a potential guide for what to do or not to do when first moving forward with an advisory.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this program evaluation was to examine the short-term outcomes of a student-teacher advisory program, created by staff members at Mountains Springs High School, and determine participants' perceptions of the program. Program evaluations are intended to improve programs and not prove them (Stufflebeam, 2001). Student advisories, when structured and implemented as planned, have been found to improve student connectedness to a school. Student connectedness to school, in turn, has been found to improve student social, emotional, and academic achievement (Blum, 2005). The findings of this evaluation provided valuable information to program stakeholders to determine whether and how the program has benefit to participants. This study relied on both extant quantitative data as well as qualitative methods of gathering key participant perceptions of the program.

Evaluation Questions

Four evaluation questions guided this study.

1. What are students' perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?
2. What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?
3. Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?

4. What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

Program Evaluation Approach

This program evaluation was conducted using mixed-method research design. Whereas the long-term outcomes of the student advisory might be for transformative purposes, the purpose of this program evaluation adhered to a pragmatic approach. Program evaluation standards of propriety utility, feasibility and accuracy influenced the design and implementation of the evaluation (Yarbrough et al., 2011). The participants, data sources, data collection and analysis methods are discussed in the sections that follow. Delimitations, limitations, assumptions and ethical considerations are also addressed.

Description of the Program Evaluation

A mixed methods approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). The pragmatic paradigm focuses on identifying what the problem is, how to determine why the problem exists, and establishing possible solutions for the problem. The pragmatic paradigm utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to shape rationale and evidence (Creswell, 2014). Researchers may use different qualitative and quantitative methods which will best help their needs for their particular research problem. The pragmatic approach helps researchers focus on what works (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

This program evaluation used a convergent parallel mixed methods approach. The convergent parallel mixed methods approach allows the researcher to gather data both qualitatively and quantitatively (Creswell, 2014). Once the data are gathered the researcher can then assess whether data from each method support or counter each other (Creswell, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to pose a meaningful and consequential problem to study, and to provide credible data collection and analysis of the evaluation questions of the problem. For this program evaluation, as the researcher was involved in the site of study as the principal of the school, a non-biased perspective and trustworthy professionalism was vigorously followed. Researchers studying their own site, who personally know participants, must be careful not to jeopardize the study through real or perceived biases (Creswell, 2014). The slightest infringement upon recognized evaluation standards can jeopardize a researcher's credibility and study (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

Participants

Students and teachers made up the primary participants in this evaluation based on their levels of engagement in the program.

Students

All students at Mountain Springs High School were assigned to an advisory. Each advisory had a staff member, primarily licensed staff, however, classified staff also were assigned to facilitate the advisory. Students were assigned as ninth graders and remain with the same students and advisor until their graduation. At time of this study, Mountain Springs had 1625 students and 195 licensed and classified staff members. The student ethnicity is 83% White, 3% Black, 4% Asian, and 7% Hispanic; 7% of students received free or reduced-price lunch. To address the needs of the school and advisory, the Equity team, consisting of staff members and student leaders, met monthly to discuss FACetime and upcoming advisory sessions. These staff members and student leaders presented information at monthly faculty meetings, modeling lessons, and providing guidance to staff members. To evaluate FACetime,

extant student and staff survey results, and a focus group protocol for participating staff were collected, with both quantitative and qualitative data for this study. Staff were selected for the focus group through purposeful sampling.

Teachers

Teacher survey results were used for this study as well as a purposeful sampling of teachers for the teacher focus groups. A purposeful sample will include those teachers who can speak directly to the topic and provide the best information (Creswell, 2014). Teachers chosen for this purposeful sample were part of the advisory program from its beginning. The qualitative data, prompted by more open questions in the focus groups, conveyed more specific insight from respondents as to why the data were showing what it did. By using the mixed message approach, quantitative data were gathered, through survey research, to establish a numeric account of the thoughts and opinions of the sample. This sample may then be used to provide a generalization of the whole (Creswell, 2014).

Data Sources

Data for this study were collected through extant student and staff survey results collected in the spring of 2019. A focus group of staff members was purposefully selected to provide their thoughts and beliefs regarding the advisory program as well.

Surveys

Surveys are useful research tools because they provide results that are general indicators for the overall population being studied (Creswell, 2014). Survey research is the compilation of data gathered through questions posed in person, on paper, by phone, or on-line (Rouse, 2017). Each year, the school's Equity team surveyed students and staff regarding FAcetime and used the survey results to modify the advisory program and plan advisory lessons for the next year.

Surveys created and used for this study were based upon surveys used in prior educational research on student advisories (see Brady & Carey, 2012; Poole, 2003). Brady and Carey's (2012) Teacher-Advisor Beliefs Survey was used as the basis for the teacher surveys for this study. Since Brady and Carey created the survey, to check for reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha was measured and found to be .906 indicating high reliability for the Teacher-Advisor Beliefs Survey instrument (Brady & Carey, 2012). Poole's (2003) student survey instrument was based upon two recognized survey instruments, the Student Opinion Survey from the National Study of School Evaluation and the Omaha Public Schools High School Survey. Questions from both the Brady and Carey (2012) and Poole (2003) survey instruments were modified to specifically include FACetime and other specific characteristics of the school's advisory. To avoid simple "Yes" or "No" responses, survey instruments for both students and teachers included Likert Scales and Open-ended questions.

Student Surveys. The student surveys administered were intended to receive feedback from students on the program and information on how to improve the advisory. All students who had participated in the advisory from the beginning of the school year were provided the opportunity to answer the on-line advisory survey during a FACetime meeting at the beginning of the second semester. Student engagement, student understanding of the advisory program, and whether students believed the program was helping them feel more connected with others were key questions of the survey. The survey used both structure and unstructured responses to gather feedback from students. Structured response questions were adopted from Poole's (2003) study on student advisories. The questions were modified to fit the needs of this study (Appendix B). Data collected from the survey was used by the Equity team in June to make any programmatic

changes and to create lessons for the next academic year. Table 1 displays overall student enrollment with student responses to the survey.

Table 1

Student FACETIME Survey Responses

Year	Enrollment	Responses	Rate
2018-2019	1588	641	40%

Teacher Surveys. Teacher surveys were administered in the spring of each year to gather information on teacher perceptions of the advisory program, their preparedness for serving as an advisory leader, their perceptions regarding student engagement and connectedness, and their recommendations for any changes. All staff members involved in FACETIME were provided the advisory survey. Questions for teachers were adopted from Brady and Carey’s (2012) study on effective leadership practices for implementing student advisories (Appendix D). As with the student survey results, teacher survey results are used by the school Equity team to help determine changes and plans for the advisory program for the upcoming school year. Table 2 displays the overall number of teachers involved in FACETIME with teacher responses to the survey.

Table 2

Teacher FACETIME Survey Responses

Year	Teachers	Responses	Rate
2018-2019	121	44	36%

Interviews

Focus groups are interviews used to study the experiences and beliefs of participants in the study. The group is organized to discuss a specific topic for the purpose of research (Gill et al., 2008). This is the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative research (Gill et al., 2008). Teacher focus group questions were created with the guidance of Dr. Peggie Constantino, Professor and Director of Executive Education at the College of William & Mary, to ensure alignment with the research study questions.

Teacher Focus Group Interviews

A group of 12 staff members was purposefully selected to participate in the teacher focus groups. Purposefully selected participants can provide the best information to the researcher regarding the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Staff members selected were those staff members who had the most experience with the advisory and who had been involved in the advisory since its implementation. The groups were split into two groups of six participants. Six to nine participants are the recommended sample size for focus groups (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The purpose of these focus groups was to obtain teachers' thoughts and beliefs about the advisory program regarding the stated evaluation questions. Focus groups are effective tools for gaining specific insights from participants (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). To gather the thoughts and beliefs of the participants, unstructured and open-ended questions were posed (Creswell, 2014). Participants were informed of the purpose of the group and permission was received before proceeding. Questions for the focus group were created using questions from Brady and Carey (2012) along with the West Virginia Department of Education and the National Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation, and guidance from Dr. Peggie

Constantino. The questions were altered to meet the needs for this study's purpose. The unstructured responses were coded for the qualitative data analysis.

The protocol for this focus group included three phases. Phase 1 identified the questions to be asked, the participants, a facilitator, a script, and a location which was virtual. Phase 2 was the conducting of the focus group. Phase 3 included summarizing the meeting, transcribing the recording of the meeting, and analyzing the results. Because the researcher held a leadership position at the research site, participants were asked to speak openly and honestly about their thoughts. The researcher took notes during the meetings as well. The meetings were recorded for the purpose of obtaining transcriptions of the meetings. Table 3 displays the evaluation questions and the corresponding survey and focus group items that pertain to each evaluation question.

Table 3

Evaluation Questions and Corresponding Items from Research Instruments

Evaluation Question	Student Survey	Teacher Survey	Teacher Focus Group
1. What are students' perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10		
2. What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?	11	10	11, 12
3. Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?		2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	2, 3, 7
4. What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?			4, 5, 6, 7

Note. See Appendices B, C, and D for full instruments.

Data Collection

The district office was notified of the program evaluation and all necessary documentation was submitted. Upon obtaining committee approval in October 2020, the research proposal was submitted to the William and Mary Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The proposal was approved by the IRB. Once the approvals were received, staff members were purposefully selected to participate in focus group for the program evaluation. Once selected, staff members were asked and notified. Information pertaining to the program evaluation and validation that it was approved by the District and the IRB were shared with all participants. Agreement forms from all participants were collected as well. In addition, extant survey data from student and staff surveys from 2018-2019 were collected.

Data Analysis

Once the extant student surveys, teacher surveys, and focus group data were compiled, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately. The convergent parallel mixed methods approach then calls for a comparison or analysis of the relatability between the three data sources. Table 3 shows the alignment of the evaluation questions with specific items from the survey.

From this analysis an interpretation may be expressed (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative data were derived from the teacher focus groups and structured teacher and survey responses. Qualitative data were obtained through the unstructured responses of the surveys as well as the focus group responses. Using the Dedoose coding program, all unstructured survey responses and the focus groups' responses were coded for themes and ideas. All survey and focus group responses were further coded by hand. Table 4 identifies the evaluation questions, data sources, and the methods of analysis.

Since data gathered were both quantitative and qualitative, analysis of the data used both descriptive statistics and coding. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, range, and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics provide “the overall average and amount of variability in the sample” (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 455). The mean provides the overall overage and the standard deviation indicates how spread out numbers are from the mean (Hoy, 2010). Coding categorizes the qualitative data for the research and helps define the data being analyzed through emergent patterns (Saldaña, 2015). Creswell (2014) states: “Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment in order to develop a general sense of it” (p. 241). Coding allows for the evaluator to categorize information for more precise analysis (Trochim, 2006).

Table 4

Identifying Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, and Methods of Analysis

Evaluation Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis
1. What are students’ perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACEtime program as it was delivered?	Student Survey (Poole, 2003)	Descriptive Statistics and Descriptive Coding
2. What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACEtime program?	Teacher Survey (Brady & Carey, 2012)	Descriptive Statistics and Descriptive Coding
	Student Survey (Poole, 2003)	
	Teacher Focus Groups	
3. Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?	Teacher Survey (Brady & Carey, 2012)	Descriptive Statistics and Descriptive Coding
	Teacher Focus Groups	
4. What are advisors’ perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?	Teacher Survey (Brady & Carey, 2012) Teacher Focus Groups	Descriptive Statistics and Descriptive Coding

All unstructured and open-ended survey responses from the student and teacher surveys and responses from the teacher focus group were coded in the first cycle of the analysis. In the first cycle of coding, general categories generated from codes then emerged as themes. The second cycle of coding further identified specific themes that were revealed from the data and the first cycle of analysis. From these codes, interpretations of the data were made regarding this study's evaluation questions.

Evaluation Question 1

What are students' perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?

To answer Evaluation Question 1, extant student survey data from the 2018-2019 school year were analyzed using descriptive statistics for structured responses and coding for unstructured responses.

Evaluation Question 2

What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?

To answer Evaluation Question 2, extant student and teacher survey data from 2018-2019 were analyzed using descriptive statistics for structured responses and coding for unstructured responses. Coded data collected from the teacher focus group were analyzed as well (see Table 4).

Evaluation Question 3

Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?

To answer Evaluation Question 3, extant student and teacher survey data from 2018-2019 school year were analyzed using coding for unstructured responses.

Evaluation Question 4

What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

To answer Evaluation Question 4, extant teacher survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for structured responses and coding for unstructured responses. Coded data collected through the teacher focus group were analyzed as well.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

Delimitations

This study focused on the 2018-2019 extant survey results from students and teachers regarding a student-teacher advisory at one high school. Teacher focus groups were conducted with purposeful sampling to include teachers who had the most experience with the student advisory. Those staff members selected were those who had participated in all professional development for the advisory and who had been advisors since the advisory began. Following the CIPP program evaluation model (Stufflebeam, 2001), this study was focusing solely on the evaluation questions for this program evaluation and was not going to evaluate any other aspect of the student advisory.

Limitations

A program evaluation assesses whether a program is accomplishing what it was intended to (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). However, due to the number of variables that must be taken into consideration and the difficulty that exists to minimize the influence of extraneous variables, all program evaluations have limitations (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Several key limitations existed in this study. The evaluator may not have adequately provided evidence that the advisory program, created by the staff of Mountain Springs High School, was grounded in sound

educational theory. Teacher focus group participants may not have shared their thoughts honestly and openly as the principal of the school was the researcher for this study. The teacher participants may have been reluctant to respond in the focus groups without bias, prejudice, or fear of reprisal. This advisory also was created at this school site and therefore may not be generalized to other contexts. Data gathered for the program evaluation may not have been purposeful if the evaluator did not adhere to the Program Evaluation Standards for Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy (Yarbrough et al., 2011). During this study, conditions in the school district changed in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The pivot to virtual learning meant that teacher participants were not engaged with the advisory program in the traditional manner and relied on memory in responding to focus group interview questions.

Assumptions

This study assumed all students and staff were participating in the advisory program at Mountains Springs High School. This study also assumed the collected data would provide insight on the beliefs of students and staff had regarding the advisory program at Mountain Springs. This study assumed there will be substantial data for analysis for each evaluation question. The study further assumed that staff would participate in the focus groups and would provide honest responses. In addition, the study presumed to provide results that would be useful to the staff at Mountain Springs High School which would guide the next steps for the advisory program. It was assumed that the program's outputs and activities were designed appropriately and implemented with fidelity to produce the intended outcomes and that the beneficiaries of the program would find value in the experience.

Ethical Considerations

Because this program evaluation included human subjects, before the evaluation began, it was approved by William & Mary's IRB. In order to gain approval, the protocol was completed and submitted to the IRB with "a brief rationale for the study, full procedures, description of the participants, copy of all tests, questionnaires, all interview questions, the informed consent form, and other pertinent information" (William & Mary, n.d.). Approval was received from the IRB within three weeks of the committee's approval of this research proposal.

Positionality

During this study, I was the principal of the high school where the study was conducted. Appropriate research standards were adhered to for the results of the study to be valid and reliable. I used caution to avoid creating, or giving the impression of creating, any undue influence on participants of this study.

Program Evaluation Standards

This program evaluation adhered to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Program Evaluation Standards. I focused solely upon the advisory program at Mountains Springs High School. Data collected only pertained to the feedback and information regarding the advisory received from Mountain Springs students and staff members.

Utility. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an assessment regarding the student and staff perceptions of FACetime at Mountain Springs High School. Evaluating a program to determine whether the program is meeting its stated goals is a key aspect of the Utility Standard (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Utility Standards determine how useful the program evaluation will be to those involved and how the results of the study will be used (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). For this program evaluation, from the gathered data and based on the data's

interpretation, strategies for how the school may use the information and modify the advisory, if necessary, were established. As all students and most staff were directly involved in the advisory, after 6 years of implementation, an evaluation at this time was reasonable and needed.

Feasibility Standards. The four key concepts of evaluability, context, values, and accountability guided the evaluation (Yarbrough et al., 2011). All students and most staff were participants in the advisory program at Mountains Springs. Students and staff were surveyed each year since implementation of the advisory program in 2014. Extant staff and student surveys from the 2018-2019 school year were readily available and were analyzed for this study. Efficient and effective use of this data provide for more in-depth program evaluation of substance and quality (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). In addition, teacher focus groups of 6 teachers each were conducted in November of 2020. At the time of this study, given the circumstances regarding COVID-19, school closure, and CDC guidelines for social distancing, virtual teacher focus groups were conducted. There was not a financial cost for this program evaluation as extant data already existed and the teacher focus groups were conducted virtually using Google Meet.

Propriety. To ensure transparency, participants in the teacher focus group were provided the purpose of the research and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix F) acknowledging their willingness to participate in the study (Yarbrough et al., 2011). All participant responses have remained confidential and no connection between their identities and their responses was established. Also, since I was both the principal of Mountain Springs and the program evaluator, a conflict of interest possibly existed and could have been perceived by participants. Ethically, I ensured that all participants were treated professionally and fairly without bias towards them or the study (Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Yarbrough et al., 2011). It was incumbent upon me to

ensure transparency and fairness. Extant survey data existed and survey respondents remained anonymous to the evaluator. In addition, I managed my bias related to interpreting the results by engaging in peer review and the results of the focus groups were shared through member checking with the participating staff members to ensure accuracy in reporting findings.

Accuracy. The program evaluation process must be transparent and the reporting of findings clearly communicated (Yarbrough et al., 2011). The purpose of the program, the theory it was based upon, its implementation, and the context in which it has been implemented, must all be evident for the program evaluation result findings to be considered accurate (Yarbrough et al., 2011). In addition, since results may be interpreted differently, the interpretation of the results must be justified and defended by the evaluator (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Extant survey data existed for this advisory. Mertens and Wilson (2012) recommend samples sizes of 100 for each major subgroup and 20-50 for each minor subgroup. In addition, focus groups should include six to nine participants (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This study met the accuracy standards for participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This program evaluation was conducted to determine students' and teachers' perceptions of their experiences, and suggestions for, one high school's advisory program. A convergent parallel mixed methods approach to analysis was used to answer the following evaluation questions.

- What are students' perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?
- What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?
- Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?
- What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

The data included in this study's findings were both qualitative and quantitative derived from extant student and teacher surveys as well as data from teacher focus groups. The teacher focus groups each included six staff members who participated in the student advisory since the program's inception and who were well positioned to provide rich and detailed accounting of the program's implementation.

Evaluation Question 1: What are students’ perceptions of their experiences as participants in the FACETIME program as it was delivered?

Students in Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 were surveyed in the spring of 2019 for FACETIME. All students were given the survey in their FACETIME advisory and provided the opportunity to complete it (Appendix B). Of the 1,588 students enrolled in the school, 641 students (40%) completed the survey. Table 5 shows the number of student respondents and percentages by grade level.

Table 5

Student FACETIME Survey Response Rate by Grade Level

Grade	Enrollment	Responses	Rate
12	385	70	18%
11	428	203	47%
10	401	273	68%
9	374	95	25%

Each year, students participating in FACETIME are sent a program survey to gather perceptions and solicit feedback related to the FACETIME advisory program. For this evaluation, extant survey data were collected from students in all grade levels at the conclusion the 2018-2019 academic year. Students responded to statements pertaining to the role of the teacher, student participation in FACETIME, and the relevance of the program. The student survey included a Likert Scale with five possible responses: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*.

Data were collected from this survey and sorted by question, for an overall school study, and then further disaggregated to each grade level. By doing so, overall student perceptions could be measured, and then more specifically, grade level perceptions could be gauged. By determining the mean of all survey results, the standard deviation of each grade level from the mean, and the overall range, the survey data provides a sharper and more specific representation of student perceptions regarding the advisory.

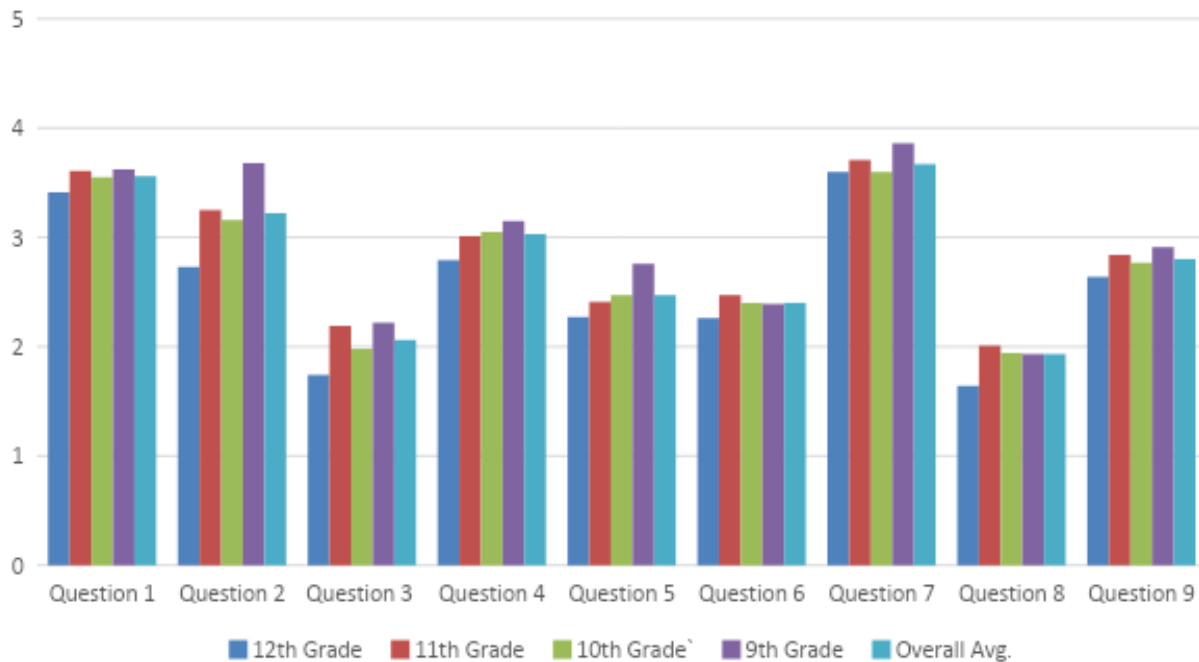
The mean is one of the measures of central tendency and indicates how data points group around a given value, allowing the researcher to better understand the data as it relates to the group as a whole. The mean was calculated for each survey question. The standard deviation also was then calculated for each question using grade level responses. The standard deviation displays by how much the scores, for this study those referring to the grade level responses, vary from the mean (Hoy, 2010). The higher the standard deviation, the higher the variance between the grade level data values. The standard deviation shows the variability of student perceptions of the advisory program at the different grade levels. This information was useful for considering program relevance and identifying areas of potential development and improvement in particular grades. The range depicts the difference between the highest and lowest numbers in the data set for each grade level by question. The range is another indicator of the variability of the collected data. A wide range may be an indicator of large variability while a smaller range may indicate a more consistent response and less variability among study participants.

The data reflected in Figure 3 and Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 pertain to Evaluation Question 1 and are based upon the students' selections of the five choices on the Likert scale: 5 (*Strongly Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), 3 (*Neutral*), 2 (*Disagree*), and 1 (*Strongly Disagree*).

Figure 3 shows the student survey mean scores for Grades 9 through 12 for the first nine questions on the survey.

Figure 3

FACETIME Student Survey Responses – Spring 2019



Role of the Teacher

Student survey Questions 1 and 7 pertained to the role of the teacher in the advisory. Specifically, the questions asked students' perceptions of the role of the teacher regarding their facilitation of FACETIME discussions and the role of the teacher as a positive figure in the advisory. These two questions resulted in ratings from students with means of 3.56 and 3.67, respectively. These were the highest means for all student survey questions. A rating of 3 on this Likert scale indicated *Neutral*, meaning the student neither agreed or disagreed with the statement. A rating of four indicated that the student *Agreed* with the statement. In addition, the

student responses for Questions 1 and 7 demonstrated the smallest range as well as the least standard deviation (SD) for all student survey responses. For both Questions 1 and 7, students in Grade 9 provided the highest ratings for the ranges and students in Grade 12 provided the lowest ratings. Table 6 shows student perceptions of the role of the teacher in FACetime.

Table 6

Student Survey Results - Student Perceptions of the Role of the Teacher in FACetime

Grade	Survey Item		Enrollment	Responses
	1. My FACetime advisors help to guide our FACetime discussions	7. My FACetime teachers play a positive role in FACetime activities/discussions		
9	3.62	3.86	374	95
10	3.55	3.6	401	273
11	3.61	3.71	428	203
12	3.41	3.6	385	70
<i>M</i>	3.56	3.67		
Range	0.21	0.26		
<i>SD</i>	0.08	0.11		

Student Participation in FACetime

Student survey Questions 4, 6, and 9 pertained to student participation in FACetime. Question 4, *I participate in FACetime activities*, had an overall mean score of 3.03. This score indicated that students were neutral regarding this question and neither agreed nor disagreed that they participated in their advisory activities. This was the highest scoring of this focus. Question 6, *Students in my FACetime participate in discussions*, was scored at 2.4. This score indicated that students disagreed that other students in their advisories participated in discussions. Question 9, *I feel comfortable talking in my FACetime setting*, was scored 2.8. This meant

students disagreed with that question yet were closer to being neutral on their thoughts of talking in the FACetime advisory. The ranges for these three questions nearly mirrored that of the first set of data regarding the role of the teacher. Again, 12th grade respondents provided the lowest scores for all three questions, meaning they disagreed with the questions indicating they had lower participation in the advisory for themselves, other students, and that they did not feel comfortable talking in the advisory setting. And except for Question 6, in which 11th graders provided the highest value, Grade 9 students once again provided the highest values for the range for Questions 4 and 9. This indicated ninth graders perceived a higher level of individual participation in their advisory and felt more comfortable talking in their advisory. Question 4, *I participate in FACetime activities*, was of note with a range of .36 with the 12th grade students scoring .21 below the next closest grade level. Question 4 also had the highest standard deviation for this group of questions scoring .12. Notably, for Question 4, the mean decreased for student participation in FACetime each year from 9th-12th grade, with the largest single year decrease occurring between 11th grade and 12th grade.

Table 7 shows the means for student survey results for Questions 4, 6, and 9, by grade level. It also shows the mean for all grade levels, the range between grade levels, and the standard deviation for each survey question.

Table 7*Student Survey Results - Student Participation in FACetime*

Grade	Survey Item			Enrollment	Responses
	4. I participate in FACetime activities	6. Students in my FACetime participate in discussions	9. I feel comfortable talking in my FACetime setting		
9	3.15	2.39	2.91	374	95
10	3.05	2.4	2.77	401	273
11	3.01	2.47	2.84	428	203
12	2.79	2.26	2.64	385	70
<i>M</i>	3.03	2.4	2.8		
Range	0.36	0.21	0.27		
<i>SD</i>	0.12	0.08	0.1		

Relevance of FACetime

Student survey Questions 3, 5, and 8 asked students their thoughts about attending FACetime and whether they thought it was relevant to them. Question 3, *I look forward to FACetime*, was scored 2.06. A 2 on this survey's Likert scale indicated students disagreed that they looked forward to advisory. Question 5, *The FACetime topics are meaningful and relevant to high school students*, was rated 2.47. The score showed that students disagreed that topics presented in the advisory were relevant to them. Question 8, *I've thought about a topic that was discussed in FACetime and had conversations with my friends about the topic*, scored 1.93. This result indicated that students strongly disagreed that they had subsequent conversations with their friends regarding a topic discussed in advisory. This group of survey questions demonstrated the greatest variability of all survey questions. Questions 3, 5, and 8 had the lowest of all means for the student survey questions, and these questions recorded the largest ranges and standard

deviations for all survey questions. As in the previous two survey groupings, the 12th-grade students scored the lowest value calculated for the ranges. For Question 3, *I look forward to FACETIME*, and Question 8, *I've thought about a topic that was discussed in FACETIME and had conversations with my friends about the topic*, 12th-grade students strongly disagreed with both statements. Also, the ranges for all three questions were greater than any of the other ranges when compared to the role of the teacher or student participation in FACETIME. Except for Question 8, the ninth-grade students again provided the highest values for the ranges indicating the they looked forward to advisory and found the topics more relevant as compared to the other grade levels. Table 8 shows the students' perceptions of the relevance of FACETIME. Student Survey Questions 3, 5, and 8 pertained to this. Table 8 shows the mean for all grade levels, the range between grade levels, and the standard deviation for each survey question.

Table 8

Student Survey Results - Student Perceptions of FACETIME Relevance

Grade	Survey Item			Enrollment	Responses
	3. I look forward to FACETIME	5. The FACETIME topics are meaningful and relevant to high school students	8. I've thought about a topic that was discussed in FACETIME and had conversations with my friends about the topic		
9	2.22	2.76	1.93	374	95
10	1.98	2.47	1.94	401	273
11	2.19	2.41	2.01	428	203
12	1.74	2.27	1.64	385	70
<i>M</i>	2.06	2.47	1.93		
Range	0.48	0.49	0.37		
<i>SD</i>	0.12	0.18	0.15		

Purpose of FACETIME

Question 10 on the student survey asked students if they understood the purpose of the FACETIME advisory. Overall, 53% of students indicated on Question 10 that they understood the purpose of FACETIME. Of students who responded to the survey, 29% indicated they did not understand the purpose and 18% were not sure of the program's purpose. Of the Grade 9 students who responded, 58% indicated they understood the purpose of the advisory, which was the highest of all grade levels. Only 48% of 10th grade student respondents indicated they understood the purpose of the program. This was the lowest of all grade levels. At least 25% of students across grade levels indicated they did not understand the purpose of FACETIME. Table 9 displays the percentage of each grade level indicating whether they understood the purpose of FACETIME for each selection for *Yes*, *No*, or *Not Sure*.

Table 9

Purpose of FACETIME – Student Responses by Grade Level

Grade	Survey Item			Enrollment	Responses
	10. I understand the purpose of FACetime				
	Yes	No	Not Sure		
9	58	25	17	374	95
10	48	31	21	401	273
11	55	27	18	428	203
12	56	33	11	385	70
Overall	53	29	18	1,588	641

Student Survey Respondent Suggestions

For Question 11 on the student survey, students were asked to provide a suggestion for FACETIME; there were 639 student responses. Responses for this question were first coded using Dedoose, a qualitative research tool that assisted with identifying general themes within the student responses. A second round of coding of all student responses was done via hand-coding. All student responses were analyzed and color-coded with four categories being identified as being significant: program relevance, program activities, mixed grade levels, and program termination. Of the 639 responses, 515 (81%), pertained to one of the identified themes; 97% of those student responses provided one suggestion. Any suggestion that garnered 10% or more for student responses was noted since, since no single theme was included in more than 24% of the student responses. Across responses, 17% of students had no suggestions. Table 10 shows the four noted categories, the number of student responses, and the percentage of student responses that correlated to that category.

Table 10

Suggestions for FACETIME – Student Response Total and Percentages

Category	Responses	%
Program Relevance	91	14%
Program Activities	100	16%
Mixed Grade Levels	61	10%
Program Termination	156	24%

Program Relevance. Across grade levels, 14% of student respondents suggested improving the relevance of the advisory for students. Of these responses, 73% came from 10th- and 11th-grade students. One 10th grader shared, “Make the lessons a little less childish. They’re on the right track, but we’ve heard these same things over and over again.” A 12th grader commented, “Only have FACetime meetings when there is a reason to meet, I feel like a lot of the meetings are completely irrelevant and a waste of time, but some of them are also really informative.” A 11th grader wrote, “Talk about what (students) want to talk about, not what teacher and admin think we should talk about.” Another 12th grade student, acknowledging that students help create the FACetime lessons, nevertheless shared this,

While there are students involved in the making of materials, it feels like the activities are designed for small children. The activities are childish games that don’t contribute to solving stress. Most teachers do nothing and the environments are not places to talk safely about stress.

A ninth grader commented,

No one thinks face time is relevant because the topics are bad. facetime should have more meaningful topics that get kids involved. we want to talk about real world problems or school wide issues we don't want to talk about e hall pass or the testing center and we definitely don't want to talk about school lunches. Make face time a time to have a meaningful topic that we can be into and have an opinion on.

A 10th grader recommended,

Talk about the brutal realities of life and about everything about what to expect and to do when life hits them. Talk about the truth of what will happen in life when comes. Tell them the truth about what they’re doing and college.

The question of whether students found the advisory topics meaningful and relevant scored an overall 2.4 mean on the survey indicating students disagreed with the question. Ninety-one students further shared their thoughts regarding the relevancy of the advisory when asked for suggestions for the advisory. Of these suggestions, most responses indicated the advisory lacked relevancy for students.

Program Activities. Most FACetime lessons are created each year during the summer. A team of FACetime student leaders, along with the school's Equity and PBIS teams, meet to review school climate surveys, FACetime surveys, and other school information, such as yearly attendance and discipline data. From this information, areas of improvement for the school are identified and advisory lessons are created to meet those needs. Comparatively, FACetime activities and topics garnered significant student commentary.

A total of 100 student respondents (16%), focused on either the FACetime activities or the topics discussed in FACetime. One 11th-grade student remarked, "Make it more fun and relevant. All of these topics are whishy [*sic*] washy and childish." Another responded,

The activities always say form a circle, but that means that we move all the desks and it takes too long. So I would suggest that they stop making us form circles? Also, we're forced to participate in the activities which is fine but some days I'm just really not feeling it.

A ninth-grade student shared, "Having debates about controversial topics that are relevant to our age group." Another stated, "make it more fun or less lesson-like so it's more appealing." A 10th-grade student suggested, "Instead of giving us things to talk about let us talk freely, it helps us get to know our peers better than sitting and being forced to talk about one specific topic in front of the whole class." A 12th grader stated, "do more activities where you mix the seniors

and freshmen so they feel more comfortable and actually ask questions/use seniors as a resource.” An 11th grader remarked, “Quit talking about goals.”

Advisory activities garnered considerable suggestions from students. Student respondents recommended advisory activities be more engaging and interactive.

Mixed Grades Levels. Since the program’s inception, the school has yearly surveyed students and staff regarding ideas to enhance and improve the advisories effectiveness. In its first years of implementation, the advisory began with mixed grade levels. A suggestion put forth by teachers within the program’s first two years was to have single grade level advisories so that advisory lessons in specific grade levels could focus most on those students’ needs. One example of an argument for this single grade level arrangement was that current ninth grade students needed to focus on the transition to high school whereas 12th-grade students needed to focus on transitioning out of high school. The school made this change and for the 2018-2019 school year and students were placed in FACETIME groups by grade level. In response to this change, 61 student survey respondents, from all grade levels, indicated that there was an interest in conducting advisement across grade levels. The students recommended that mixed FACETIME groups be reinstituted. One 12th-grader remarked, “mix the grades again – it was a good way to get advice from upperclassmen and have NEW faces to recognize in the hallway. An 11th grader stated, “BRING BACK MIXED GRADES AT LEAST. THOSE WERE ACTUALLY GOOD ... AT LEAST IF I TALK TO UNDERCLASSMEN I HAVE A PURPOSE.” A 10th grader wrote,

Go back to how it was last year because you say face time is an opportunity to get acquainted with other grades but now that it is just in our own grade there is no point to it because if we wanted to become friends with the people we have known since [sixth]

grade then we would already be friends but like if [we aren't] friends with them then face time is not going to magical[ly] change that.

Another 10th grader suggested,

Make it like it was last year. It's better to have students from all grades that don't know each other as well which helps with discussions and participation and also getting to know new people. This year's facetime doesn't have that same effect.

An 11th grader remarked,

I feel this new style of grouping of wholly counterintuitive to what FaceTime should be. We've been with the same people over and over. With no difference in grade or last name, a big part of FaceTime is absent. Next year we should go back to the old style, blending grades and last names.

One 12th grader recommended, "go back to having multiple grade levels in a smaller group so discussions are better and more comfortable." Another said, "Have students vote for FaceTime topics and go back to mixed facetime groups." Yet another senior commented, "Go back to integrating the grades in facetimes and conduct activities that everyone can get involved with."

The constitution of advisories, specifically regarding the grades included in an advisory, was put forth by 10% of student respondents. Most students indicated a desire for mixed grade level advisories rather than single grade level advisories.

Program Termination. Yearly, students are surveyed on their thoughts and suggestions for improving advisory. The year of this study, 49 students responded to the request for suggestions for FACetime by specifically responding, "get rid of it." Overall, 24% of students responding to Question 11 recommended the program be stopped. Other than the 9th grade, whose leading response for Question 11 was "no suggestion," ending the school advisory was

the most prevalent response for Grades 10, 11, and 12. A total of 26% of 10th graders, 25% of 11th graders, and 30% of 12th graders commented on this. Those students who responded with further suggestions indicated that the time scheduled for FACETIME could be better used for other activities. One student commented, “Get rid of it. It’s a waste of time. I could be doing homework.” Another student shared, “To not have it kinda wastes time for my other classes.” Another student remarked, “Get rid of it because nobody enjoys it. Just make it into a sort of resource block and let the clubs do things during this time.” One student leader said, “Take it away. I’m a leader and no one listens to me.” Some teachers chose to provide students with snacks during their FACETIME lessons and for some students that was a positive aspect of FACETIME. A student summed their thoughts regarding the food inducement by saying, “don’t have it, it’s a waste of time and no one enjoys it except for when we get food.” An 11th grader shared their thoughts with “Get rid of it. I’m begging you.” A 12th grader wrote,

Don’t do it. Almost every single person I have ever talked to hates FACETIME. It is a complete waste of our time. We have actual important school work to be doing. We come here to learn and prepare for college. Not to talk about culture and emotion and be required to watch a video about black history.

The most pronounced student survey suggestion was for advisory to stop. Student rationale for this recommendation included lack of advisory relevancy and the time could be better used for completing classwork or participating in clubs.

Summary

Collectively, for all grade levels, student responses indicated that teachers had a positive influence on the advisories. For Questions 1 and 7, which focused on the role of the teacher, the mean scores were the highest in comparison to other questions. The scores indicate that students

perceived teachers played an important role in facilitating advisory discussions and teachers were positive figures in advisory. In addition, the range between grade levels were the smallest or next to smallest comparing all other questions meaning the grade levels were more closely aligned regarding the teachers' role in advisory. The standard deviation also was the smallest. Considering these descriptive statistics, the data reflect consistency among the students' perceptions of teacher involvement in FACETIME.

Questions 4, 6, and 9 focused on student participation in advisory. Student perceptions of student participation indicated students neither agreed nor disagreed about their individual participation in their student advisory. However, with an overall mean score of 2.8, students' scores indicated that students did not feel overly comfortable talking in their student advisory. In addition, whereas students personally did not agree or disagree with their own participation in advisory, student perceptions of their peers indicated clearly that they did not think their peers were engaged in the advisory. The mean score for Question 6, *Students in my FACETIME participate in discussions*, was 2.4 with a range of .21 and a standard deviation of .08. Grade levels were consistent and closely aligned with this response.

Questions 3, 5, and 8 focused on the students' perceptions of the advisory's relevance. Student perceptions of FACETIME indicated a disagreement that the advisory was relevant. Students responses indicated a disagreement with question three, *I look forward to FACETIME*. With a mean score of 2.06, this was the second lowest mean of all survey questions. Also, students' perceptions of question five, *The FACETIME topics are meaningful and relevant to high school students*, scored 2.47, indicated that students did not agree that the topics for FACETIME were meaningful. Furthermore, 14% of students went on to comment on the program's relevance in question 11 when asked for suggestions. Finally, on Question 8, which asked whether students

thought about a topic that was discussed in FACETIME and had conversations with their friends about the topic, students indicated their strongest disagreement of the survey with that question. With a mean score of 1.93, the lowest of the survey, and a standard deviation of .15, students in all grades were consistent with their perceptions of this. The 11th grade respondents were the only grade to have a mean score for this question above a 2.

Table 11 represents the descriptive statistics by grade level for questions one through nine, including the mean, range, and standard deviation (SD) for each student survey question. These data provide for clearer interpretation of the consistency or variability that existed between grade levels and student perceptions of the advisory.

Table 11

FACETIME Student Survey Descriptive Statistics

	Survey Item								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>M</i>	3.56	3.22	2.06	3.03	2.47	2.4	3.67	1.93	2.8
Range	.21	.95	.48	.36	.49	.21	.26	.37	.27
<i>SD</i>	0.08	0.34	0.12	0.12	0.18	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.1

Evaluation Question 2: What suggestions do advisors and advisees have for improving the FACETIME program?

Students' suggestions for improving the program coalesced around four themes: program relevance, program activities, advisory grade level assignments, and program termination.

Advisor suggestions were collected from both extant survey responses from the 2018-2019 teacher FACETIME survey and the focus group interviews conducted in November 2020. On the

teacher survey, which 44 teachers responded, teachers were asked how FACETIME could be improved. Some teachers responded with more than one suggestion as there were 50 responses. Twelve members of the faculty were chosen to participate in focus group interviews. These teachers were identified because of their experience in their role as mentors in the advisory program and because they have been teachers in the school since the advisory program began. Focus group interviews were conducted in two groups of six teachers each. Teachers were asked to respond to a series of questions related to their experiences with the advisory. Due to safety precautions required during the COVID19 pandemic, Google Meet was used so teachers could meet virtually. The meetings were recorded and transcriptions were created for both meetings. Using the transcription program, Dedoose, teacher responses from both the teacher survey and teacher focus groups were analyzed and coded. These teacher responses were then coded a second time via hand coding to further identify specific themes. Of note, for the 2020-2021 school year, the Mountain Springs school district required a teacher-student advisory time each day. Teacher focus groups respondents discuss this change (from one meeting per week) in their responses.

Themes that were identified in 10% of the teacher survey responses were noted and recorded. No theme was included in over 20% of teacher survey responses. Analysis of both the teacher survey responses and teacher focus group responses indicated that teacher suggestions aligned with student suggestions including improving program relevance, program activities, and mixed grade levels. Teachers also further recommended focusing on student leaders, teacher vulnerability, teacher pairings, and advisory organization. These themes are described below.

Program Relevance

Students. Students indicated a lack of advisory relevancy in the student survey. Ninety-one, or 14%, of student respondents' suggestions pertained to relevancy with most responses indicating an absence of relevancy. Students suggested topics covered in advisory should be meaningful and purposeful for high school students to discuss.

Teachers. The most frequently offered suggestion from the teacher survey, with 20% of the responses, focused on FACetime relevance and ensuring the topics discussed in FACetime were relevant to students. One teacher remarked, "The students are not overly interested in the topics or discussion and I'm not sure they see the importance." Corroborating that sentiment, teacher responses on the survey indicated that student engagement in discussions was low with 38.6% indicating "Discussions are limited" and 43.2% indicating "Students do not really share in my FACetime." Another teacher survey respondent recommended, "I believe that there should be some weeks where more real-life topics should be addressed. Perhaps we could discuss current events in sports, politics, news, music, etc. It breaks up the topics while still feeling relevant to the students." One teacher from the focus group remarked about her advisory and also encouraged current event discussions, "They're like, this is our favorite class. They want to be able to talk about what's on their mind. They want to be able because it's a very powerless situation we're in right now [referring to the COVID19 Pandemic]."

Student survey responses, teacher survey responses, and teacher focus group responses all included considerable suggestions for the advisory to include more relevant topics and information for high school students.

Program Activities and Organization

Students. Program activities garnered the second highest number of suggestions from students. One-hundred students commented on the advisory activities and suggested more engaging activities and activities intended for high school students. Some student responses indicated the activities seemed intended more for younger students.

Teachers. On the teacher survey, 77% of teachers rated the ease of implementation of FACETIME activities a 3, 4, or 5. Both teacher focus groups indicated that the advisory was well organized, structured, and that it has improved over the years since its inception. The majority of teacher focus group participants acknowledged the placement of advisory lessons in the Schoology platform at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year provided clarity and easy access for advisory teachers. Before the 2020-2021 school year, advisory lessons were sent out to teachers via email and were presented and reviewed in monthly faculty meetings. However, the teachers thought meeting every day during the 2020-2021 school year was too much and that some advisory activities could not be accomplished in the time provided. Again, it must be noted, for the 2020-2021 school year, due to the pandemic and virtual schooling experience, all high schools in the district as Mountain Springs are following the same schedule which has advisory meeting every day. For Mountain Springs, in previous years, the advisory met once a week. While this school year is anomalous, one teacher remarked on the increased number of advisory lessons while also mentioning the positive progression of the advisory and stated, “Maybe we’re doing too much every day. It’s taxing, but we’re closer than we were in years past.” Another teacher shared, “I caught myself a couple times not getting through everything that was there. That’s all, just a little bit maybe paring down things that are there.” Another teacher presented the idea of designating specific days of the week that an advisory lesson would

be taught or an activity would be included. According to the teacher, by doing so, teachers and students would not be overwhelmed by the number of lessons every day and it would make advisory more meaningful and reasonable. Along those lines, three teachers recommended that the morning announcements be included in advisory since those too could provide topics for teachers and students to discuss while helping to ensure students were aware of school events and opportunities.

Students and teachers suggested advisory activities be engaging for high school students. Teachers also suggested a reconsidering the number of advisory lessons delivered in a week and possibly providing advisories with more unencumbered time to discuss topics of their own choosing.

Advisory Grade Level Assignments

Students. Most students commenting on advisory grade levels did so by recommending the advisory return to multi-grade level advisories. Whereas some students commented on the benefit of the single grade level, overwhelmingly, students indicated a desire to have all grades included in an advisory so that they could meet other students. Students also noted the importance of older students mentoring younger students in the advisory.

Teachers. Students are currently assigned to their FACETIME advisory by grade level. When the advisory first began, students from Grades 9-12 were assigned advisories together. Upon feedback from teachers, the advisory groups were placed into grade level assignments in 2018-2019. The intent of that change was to enable the school to focus upon the specific needs of each grade level during advisory. However, 61 student survey respondents advocated for mixed grade-levels in advisory and so too did five teachers in the teacher focus groups. In addition, 10% of teacher responses from the teacher survey recommended that students from all grade

levels be included in each FACETIME group. One teacher comment from the teacher survey pointed out, “Integrating grade levels. My students are with the same ‘alphabet group’ they’ve known since elementary school. They are clearly uninterested in getting to know one another at this point.” Another teacher from the focus group said,

It was more effective when we had a more diverse group of freshmen with seniors. I think there’s something about having those connections with kids and older grades. I would see them start talking to each other as they saw each other in the hallway. They would say “hey” and I would just hear snippets of their conversations. They developed relationships that they would not have otherwise developed.

Another teacher shared that if the school was going to continue with grade level advisory assignments that mixed grade level activities should be included. The teacher said,

When we had juniors and seniors, half of the FACETIME groups went to the other FACETIME groups so that we would have seniors who could answer questions for juniors. I think we need to do more of that. I think it would even be a good idea when we’re back in the building to even have a time when the freshmen and seniors got to talk. I think freshman view their senior year and college is so far away and I think it might be beneficial for them to hear from seniors about how quickly that time goes.

Not all teachers felt comfortable with the mixed grade advisories. One shared, “There were definitely advantages when you had the mixed grade levels.” However, he then commented,

I was bogged down in the content of [advisory] and I didn’t want to stray from it.

Whenever I would try to do it with seniors in the mixture, I was probably one of those folks that wasn’t animated enough. I couldn’t make the mixture happen.

Another remarked,

There are some advantages though with just having the single grade level because I have done extra things with my group like at the beginning of the year. They're really interested in finding out about the college application process because they're juniors, so I was able to contact their counselor and the counselor came in and talked to the kids.

Students and teachers alike suggested the return to multi-grade levels in advisory. Both students and teachers noted the benefits of students meeting other students they otherwise would not meet, and the mentoring opportunities that would be available within each advisory.

Program Termination

Students. The leading suggestion for students was to stop the advisory program. Nearly one-quarter of all student responses, or 156 students, on the survey recommended this action. Many responses did not include an explanation but simply asked that the program end. Other student responses suggested the termination of the program due to the lack of meaningful topics, activities, or discussion in their advisories. Students also offered that the time dedicated to advisory could be better spent by students working on classroom assignments or participating in clubs or other school activities.

Teachers. Program termination was not a notable response from teachers on either the teacher survey or the teacher focus groups. However, teachers survey remarks did include comments that the advisory did not appear to be functioning as intended and that students were not making meaningful connections with either their peers or their advisor. Also, teacher responses on the survey noted the difficulty of getting students to participate in advisory lessons and that students did not appear to enjoy or see the point of advisory. Teacher focus group participants discussed similar concerns regarding student engagement, however, the focus groups did not suggest termination of the program.

Program termination was the leading student suggestion for the advisory program. Teachers did not suggest program termination, however, difficulties with the advisory, such as student participation, and whether the advisory was working as intended were mentioned especially in the teacher survey responses.

Student Leaders

Students. Two student comments pertained to student leaders. The only suggestion was for student leaders to receive the advisory lessons in advance.

Teachers. Currently, each advisory group has at least one student leader that meets monthly with the advisory staff leaders and other student leaders. This group of students and staff create the advisory lessons for the school. The student leaders also lead or co-lead these lessons with the teachers in their advisory. When asked questions about advisory student leaders, teacher focus group responses indicated an interest in developing student leadership within the advisory program. A total of 52% of teachers responding on the teacher survey agreed that student leaders played a positive role in their FAcetime group. Teachers agreed that the use of student leaders could be beneficial in leading advisory lessons, however, two teachers specifically stated the need to consider the selection of students who serve as advisory leaders, and the need for better training for the leaders on how to deliver the lessons effectively. One teacher shared that he had a ninth grade student leader who could organize the lesson but was too overwhelmed to actually lead her peers through the lesson. This teacher remarked,

I think the students leaders are a good idea, but I think that it needs to be probably a better training for them or better understanding or maybe choosier about the quality of the kids that choose to be leaders and not to do volunteers.

Responses from the teacher survey indicated a positive perception of the role of student leaders in FACETIME. One teacher said, “I feel that FACETimes with leaders do a better job with the interaction with their peers.” The teacher further recommended, “Perhaps a Senior leader should be paired with the Freshman for many beneficial reasons.”

Teacher Vulnerability

Students. Students did not discuss teacher vulnerability.

Teachers. All teachers in both focus groups responded to questions about how to improve the student advisory. Teachers survey responses showed some teachers were uncomfortable with delivering advisory lessons, however, these responses never ventured into teacher vulnerability. In all, 50% of teacher focus group participants shared their views on teacher vulnerability as an advisory leader sharing this as an important component of a successful advisory. They described vulnerability as a teacher’s capacity to reveal personal information or insecurities with their advisees. Teachers wondered if professional development existed that may help teachers more comfortably demonstrate this attribute in their advisories. The focus group teachers shared their thoughts and perceptions that teachers who were able to successfully conduct advisory lessons, and who openly shared with their students that they did not have complete confidence in the subject matter being discussed, were viewed more favorably by their advisory students as being more personal and authentic. They based this upon their own experiences and on what their colleagues had shared with them. The teachers noted that personally, and they perceived it to be true for some of their colleagues, that this was difficult to do. They perceived that teachers did not want to be viewed as anything less than confident and knowledgeable. One teacher remarked,

I think it's irrefutable that [FACetime] breaks down barriers. One of the things FACetime does, from my perspective, that Chemistry does not do, is that I'm virtually infallible in the Chemistry realm. In the FACetime realm, like I've been saying throughout our discourse here, I am not an expert on almost any of the things that we talk about and I'm afraid about giving bad advice. But I am very fallible and the kids can see that.

When the teacher was asked whether he thought that was positive, he shared,

I actually do. In Chemistry, I have the answer for everything. In FACetime, I'm nowhere near that certain of myself and it shows them that, hey, I am human right? We're all human and I am human and there are a lot of things out there I don't know about and I'll tell you that. They don't get that in my Chemistry class.

Another teacher remarked that advisory presented teachers with a rhetorical question of how vulnerable were they willing to be? The teacher also noted the need to provide some staff with professional development to learn how to demonstrate this vulnerability. The teacher stated,

I think this is an opportunity for teachers to be vulnerable as advisors. Some teachers are very strong and it's based on very strong organizational skills. But then they need to kind of take that off and be vulnerable at times and that's a special skill. Some of us might feel more comfortable about that and I don't know if they need a training for teachers or if you can train it or not.

A third teacher commented that teaching advisory "stretches our staff in ways that puts them in an uncomfortable zone. Our math teachers are uncomfortable having open talks and I think we find sometimes our science teachers are uncomfortable with those open discussions." The teacher further shared that advisory introduces teachers to the full spectrum of students in the

school. She said, FACetime “allows our higher-level teachers who may be only teaching the AP classes to have students that are in Special Education or maybe have lower academic abilities.”

This was viewed as being beneficial for those teachers, who possibly were unaware of the special needs of some students. The teacher indicated this helped advisors become more familiar, comfortable, and empathetic with those students.

Teacher Pairings

Students. Students did not discuss teacher pairings.

Teachers. When asked which elements of FACetime they find beneficial, teachers noted the importance of purposeful pairing of teacher advisory partners. Two teachers in one focus group were advisory partners and they both shared the importance of their positive relationship and how it affected their advisory. The two teachers have been advisory partners for four years and have had the same students for all 4 years of high school. Because of their relationship and comfort level with each other, they believed that their students felt comfortable with them and with their peers in the class. One of the teachers said, “They are so comfortable with one another. They’re open and I think that’s the best thing.” Another teacher shared that when creating the teacher pairings, surveying the staff on their comfort level teaching advisory would be beneficial. His thought was that a staff member confident in their ability to conduct advisory could be coupled with a staff member who was more tentative to do so. Another teacher shared, “the stronger the chemistry that exists with those adults, it really helps to foster a good environment for the students as well. That’s a key component for the advisory group because as adults we set the tone.”

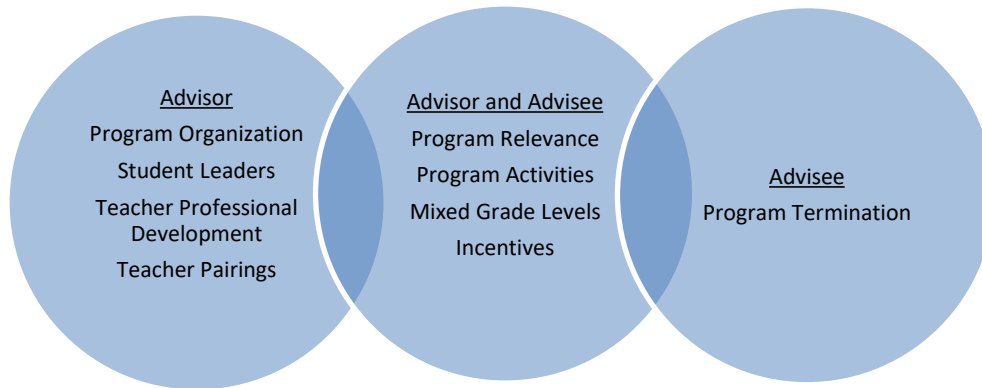
Summary

Corresponding suggestions from the two groups included Program Relevance, Program Activities, and Mixed Grade Levels. Specifically, both groups recommended that advisory lessons be created that students find relevant and engaging. In addition, although some respondents acknowledged the benefits of same grade level advisory, the prevailing recommendation from advisors and advisees was to include mixed grades in the advisory setting. And although not prominent in either groups' responses, both groups did include a recommendation for incentivizing student participation in advisory with some type of refreshments.

The student suggestion of terminating the program, although notable among student responses, was not reflected in the teacher responses. Teachers also focused their suggestions on the organization and processes of the student advisory. Teacher preparation and training, teacher pairings, program information dissemination, and the incorporation and roles of student leaders all were areas that teachers suggested enhancements could be made to improve the overall efficacy of the advisory program. Figure 4 shows the suggestions that teacher advisors and student advisees had for the FACETIME advisory.

Figure 4

Advisor and Advisee Suggestions for FACETIME Advisory



Evaluation Question 3: Which elements of the program do advisors find most beneficial and which least beneficial?

Advisor Looping

Looping is the educational practice of teachers or mentors remaining with the same students for at least 2 years (Baran, 2008). The benefits of this practice were discussed in both teacher focus groups with all teachers supporting this practice. Especially noted by teachers were those that had experienced looping with their advisory students since the students were freshman. Participants indicated having the same students, especially all four years of high school, enhanced the connectedness and relationships of the group. One teacher stated,

We're having these groups kind of start as freshmen go all the way to seniors together has really been awesome. They interact so well, they kind of answer each other's questions in a way. They're really helping each other through stuff.

Another teacher, who typically teaches seniors noted,

Another thing that I found is just watching them grow over the four years. I don't get to see this growth that occurred and with them, when they came in ninth grade, they were challenging and I was ready to pull my hair out. I saw the growth last year and I'm continuing to see that growth again this year. So that's a unique opportunity as well.

Another teacher shared, "I love that we've grown into the model that the staff members move up with the students. And another commented, "I was picking back up on what Paul and Alison [teacher participants] were saying about having them for 4 years and you do really develop that relationship with them." However, one teacher shared that the circumstances of this year have made it difficult to make connections with the freshmen since they have not yet been in the school and he is having to continue to encourage his advisory students to turn on their cameras so he can see them.

Advisory Meeting Consistency

Before the 2020-2021 school year, Mountain Springs advisory met once a week. This weekly advisory schedule was in place for five years before the current school year and 75% of teacher focus group participants indicated these weekly meetings provided time for them to make meaningful connections with their advisory students. However, due to the districtwide schedule change for all high schools for the 2020-2021 school year because of the COVID 19 pandemic, advisory meets virtually Tuesday through Friday beginning each day. One teacher commented positively on the benefits of meeting daily, and that the consistency with his students was helpful for him to make connections with his advisees. However, four other participants commented that meeting daily may be too much for teachers and students. One teacher remarked,

I think this year having it every day is a lot. I think it's putting a strain on the student leaders. I think it's putting a strain on the faculty leaders of FACETIME. I'm hearing they they're trying to put things together that are good and they don't want to do fun and light activities every single day. They want to make sure that some of the things have substance. But it's a lot to just put on the students to have them come up with four lessons for every single week. [It] would be more beneficial to have one lesson of substance a week and maybe do some announcements.

Another teacher recommended that if advisory was going to meet more often that specific weekdays be assigned for topics or themes to break up the time. His point was to intertwine lighter days with more serious topics so that students had time to process and discuss the information presented and not have to move onto another topic the very next day. He thought this would be a more meaningful experience for the students. One teacher shared, "I've had several students comment that doing it every day is problematic. It seems like we're stretching a little bit and I think the kids might get more out of it just doing it once a week." However, another teacher shared that "the schedule for me this year is the most important thing for that connectivity and being consistent."

Teachers indicated that meeting weekly with their advisees provided time for them to establish positive relationships with their students and to effectively present advisory lessons. Regarding advisory meeting daily, however, only one teacher commented positively on the increase of advisory meetings as other participants deemed it too much for students and teachers.

Student Leaders

Five teacher focus group participants, or 42%, and 10% of the teacher survey responses, included thoughts regarding student leaders. One comment from the teacher survey responses

indicated that the student leaders were ill prepared to lead the advisory. Other teacher responses indicated the incorporation of student leaders was beneficial for the program. One teacher said,

One beneficial element that I was thinking of too is the student leaders. We're not always celebrating the same students over and over so it's not like going to a pep rally and it's the same kids. It's we're given these other students who aren't normally engaged somehow. Like I have Chris who's an Eagle Scout and he's a leader, but he's not throwing the football around. But when he comes in, he gets to be like a shining star inside that room with us. And then the kids are starting to understand. Oh, I don't have to be on a certain social part of the ladder, this rung down here is important as well.

Another teacher commented on the importance of students playing a role in the creation of the advisory lessons. The teacher remarked,

I like that some of its student led and I wish that more of it was student-led because if the students buy into this, then it's very beneficial. I've noted that a lot of the current presentations are being given to us by faculty or they've been uploaded by faculty. And, yes, that's good. But I think if we could get more buy-in from the students then the program becomes much stronger across the board and that's where I would look when we have presentations on a daily basis. A lot of those would be developed from students in the student council or the advisory council that they go to and I wish we saw more of it.

Five teachers from the teacher focus group indicated student leaders were beneficial for the advisory program. Teachers shared that student leaders could be instrumental in the creation of relevant advisory plans and with encouraging their peers to participate in advisory.

FACETIME Activities

Each focus group discussed the activities in FACETIME. One teacher shared her concern

with the activities by discussing the lack of participation in her previous advisory group. She shared,

No one opens up. I'll ask a question in FACETIME and no one answers. So, I basically have to require them to answer and then like have the answers are just [insincere]. The walls are up and that really depends on how well the kids know each other.

The teacher then shared, however, that she currently has ninth graders.

I have freshmen right now and so they don't bat an eye...they don't know any difference so I thought that was really interesting that some of the maybe older students are like, man we have this every day, whereas the freshmen haven't complained about that because they don't know any different.

Another teacher remarked that she does not follow the FACETIME lessons if they are not "organic" and "authentic." She shared that students would not buy-in to the program if they felt it was not purposeful and "real." She said,

90% of the time from the moment we started to even now, I don't follow [the advisory lesson] if they aren't organic and authentic. I believe if you're not either of these or even one of these [the students] will sniff that out and fail to engage. They don't want to have to watch a video. I remember when the videos were so silly at the beginning to speak truth. And my kids are like, "this is embarrassing" and then we kind of grew and were like, okay those videos don't work.

The teacher continued by saying she does teach some of the lessons, however, she spends much of her FACETIME discussing current events with her students since she believed that is what students most want to talk about.

Another teacher shared that having to prepare for the FACETIME activities was the least beneficial part of the program. He indicated that since he was not sure at times what the intended outcomes were for a specific advisory lesson, he did not feel equipped to respond to some student questions.

For instance, today is a classic even though we watched a video or two videos today. I find some of those videos to be very interesting like the one today. I didn't know exactly because I have not prepped for it. So, I didn't know exactly where the presentations were going and what my role is on this. Sometimes I think what's not beneficial is that I don't feel like I'm an expert in a lot of the discussions and that I would give me two cents in. I can give some life experiences about what's happened to me or what I think but I never feel like I'm an expert in the discussions.

One teacher shared that the assignment of counselors to advisory groups was a beneficial change for FACETIME. Counselor assignments were set by student last names just as the advisories were. Because of this purposeful alignment, counselors could meet with their students in advisory and provide lessons to their students. Another teacher shared,

I like when we deal with goal setting. I like when we talk about organizing and working through as a support group. So, I guess I like the components that deal more with self-improvement and finding support when we need extra support.

All focus group teachers and 20% of teacher survey responses mentioned advisory activities. Most concerning for focus group teachers and survey respondents was the lack of engagement by students with the lessons.

Advisory Grade Levels

Teachers within the focus groups were almost evenly divided regarding whether to have

grade level advisories or mixed grade levels. Three teachers recommended multi-grade level advisories, four recommended single-grade level advisories, and one indicated she understood and supported the merits of both. Twelve percent of teacher survey responses pertained to advisory grade levels. Of those responses, most respondents recommended multi-grade advisories. At the onset of the advisory, Mountain Springs had mixed grade levels in the FACETIME advisory. Currently, all FACETIME advisories are single grade level. Teachers presented viewpoints both supporting and opposing such an arrangement with varying rationale. One teacher commented,

I prefer to work with homogenized all same grade level in my advisory because early on my ninth and 10th graders, even in a small group, were reluctant to talk and open up. Having them all of the same grade level seems to enhance the connection between students.

Another teacher responded, “I know there are benefits to having the different classes in there when you have some seniors and freshmen, but sometimes a senior and a freshman just can’t relate.” Another teacher, who shared his support for mixed grade level advisories, recommended using advisory to encourage students to become involved in other extracurriculars so they could meet students from other grade levels. This teacher said,

I do notice that as a coach, I see a lot of those bonds between seniors or freshmen if the kids are involved in extracurricular activities. And so advisory might be a way to, and this is turning a negative into a positive thing, that advisor could use advisory to try to encourage kids to get involved more in those extracurricular activities.

One teacher shared her disagreement when the school changed to single grade level advisories,

I was really against that. I was truly against it and I've softened towards [single grade advisory] to some degree, because there are things we can do grade level wise. I still believe It was more effective when we had a more diverse group of freshmen with seniors. I think there's something about having those connections with kids and older grades.

Since the advisory's inception, the school has conducted advisory models with both multi-grade and single-grade advisories. Teachers noted the benefits and disadvantages of both types of advisories. Teachers shared that multi-grade level advisory offered students the opportunity to meet students in other grades along with providing mentoring opportunities. Other teachers endorsed single-grade advisories as they provided opportunities for advisory lessons to focus on the specific needs of students in a particular grade. Teachers also noted single grade advisories did not offer the chance for students to meet with students from other grade levels.

Summary

Teacher advisors identified both beneficial and nonbeneficial elements of the student advisory. Teachers found that remaining with the same group of students through their high school experience was beneficial. As one teacher in a focus group indicated, "having them for 4 years you do really develop that relationship with them." That sentiment aligned with Ziegler and Mulhall (1994) who indicated that students should remain with their advisor through graduation.

Teacher responses from the teacher survey and teacher focus group responses also identified consistent advisory meetings as a benefit. Some responses indicated that the advisory met too often, however, most teachers indicated that advisory meeting at least once per week was a positive aspect of the program. By meeting often, teacher advisors felt they were able to better

know their advisees and understand their individual needs. Their thoughts correlated with those of Chaffee et al. (2012) who indicated that advisories that met every 2 weeks or less did not provide the opportunity for advisors and advisees to effectively create meaningful relationships.

Teachers identified student advisory leaders as benefits to the program both in the creation of the advisory lessons and leading the advisories along with teachers. They recommended that students selected as student leaders receive further leadership training to enhance their abilities to facilitate advisory lessons and discussions and that, when at all possible, activities should be included in the advisory lesson to promote student engagement. Teachers further indicated student participation and interest waned if students did not find the advisory lesson interesting, meaningful, or purposeful. In addition, several teachers from the teacher focus groups recommended that rather than employing a planned advisory lesson every time advisory meets, have some advisory days where the students and teacher can just talk.

Evaluation Question 4: What are advisors' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

All 12 teacher focus group participants indicated they felt prepared and were provided the necessary resources for the FACETIME advisory. They remarked that the distribution and organization of materials were clear and helpful. Most felt they were prepared to support the short term and long-term outcomes for the program. One teacher indicated that partnering with a colleague contributed to her feeling prepared to conduct FACETIME. However, four teachers did differentiate preparedness between having materials provided and training for lesson delivery. The teachers commented on the need for additional training for staff. Also, teacher responses from the 2018-2019 teacher survey indicated that 68.2% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the purpose of FACETIME while 15.9% of teachers disagreed with that

statement. In addition, 61% of teacher respondents on the teacher survey indicated they felt capable of facilitating their FACetime group discussions and 23% did not agree or disagree with that statement. 16% of staff disagreed and indicated they did not feel capable of facilitating the discussions. Responses coalesced around themes including FACetime materials, FACetime training, short-term outcomes, mid-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes.

FACetime Materials

FACetime advisory lesson booklets have been created for staff in past years. These booklets contained all advisory lessons, learning objectives, and directions for each FACetime session. For the 2020-2021 school year, all lessons were provided in a FACetime folder on the school's Schoology platform. Regarding the organization for FACetime, one teacher commented, "I don't think there's any better way to organize it than the way it's been done this year." Another shared,

I feel like we have more support than ever and we need it. Let's be real, we need it to be easy and seamless especially because we're meeting every day. It would be daunting to have an additional prep every day.

Another teacher shared, "I would say lots of support especially with the fact that they provide us with wonderful plans and resources—not a whole lot of training."

Since the school moved to begin FACetime, staff members have received professional development to assist them with leading their advisories. This professional development took place in the beginning of the year or during the year in faculty meetings. One teacher recalled the circle training and the use of the talking piece and how that training helped change how he conducted his advisory. He shared, "I probably wouldn't have really installed [circles] without that bit of training and it pulls out some of the quiet kids. Structures, that was something that I

got from training.” Another teacher remarked, “training—we could use a little bit more. I’d like to get feedback or talk with other schools that are doing similar programs about what they’re doing. I’d like to have that connect with other groups.” Another teacher commented on how teachers may feel prepared in one regard but not in another.

I think we’re very well academically prepared. When I say that I mean the guides for what to do and the resources for what to do. But I think some people are much more comfortable with any topic that comes up. I don’t know and I don’t have the answer to how staff would be better prepared to emotionally dive into some of these or psychologically dive into some of these topics. I don’t know how you prepare everybody who doesn’t feel comfortable with talking with teenagers about some of these topics.

Short-Term Outcomes: School Connectedness

All 12 of the teachers in the teacher focus groups indicated they felt prepared to help students become more connected to the school. One said,

I’d say I’m a 10, or at least a 9 [out of 10], totally prepared to help kids. That kind of gets back to my point I made earlier about using [advisory] as an opportunity to launch kids into more activities in the school. So, yeah, I think I’m totally prepared.

Another teacher talked about the importance of her awareness of the opportunities and resources available to students in the school. She shared the value of getting to know her students so that if they were not engaged in an activity in the school, whether it be with an academic or extracurricular group, she could encourage them to become involved and help them make the necessary connections to do so. However, teacher responses on the teacher survey indicated 38.6% of teachers felt they could talk easily with their students in their FACETIME group, and 36.4% disagreed with that statement.

Mid-Term Outcomes: Cultural Competency

When asked about the preparedness to help students become culturally competent, ten of twelve teachers felt prepared to do so. Three of the teachers stated that the content they teach helped them with this endeavor. One teacher shared, “We deal with it all the time in our curriculum and so it comes out. I think more naturally in the Social Sciences and probably English with some of the writings.” Another replied,

I personally feel well prepared. We have tackled that issue in some of our faculty meetings and some of our trainings, but also my curriculum includes quite a bit of that as each class sings in different languages and we discussed different cultures and the history of different types of music all around the world.

Another teacher commented,

We don’t have a very diverse student body and so I think some students’ stance on this as this doesn’t really affect me. I think we need to be very conscious of that and sometimes have uncomfortable conversations. I think only through that can they grow. And we grow. We can’t take our foot off the gas.

Another teacher shared how she worked with students on cultural competency. She stated,

I think we just need to be open for whatever their responses may be. I don’t think we can ask them a question and hope they answer in a certain way. I think we have to meet them where they are and then try to take them along the way with us.

Long-Term Outcomes: Global Citizens

Nine teacher focus group participants indicated they felt prepared to help students become informed global citizens. Three focus group teachers shared that they were focused on the short and mid-term outcomes and had yet to reach the long-term outcomes. One teacher said,

“I feel like the global citizenship is the last layer we would get to. I feel like that’s a really high bar to reach on the ladder and I’m not sure that we’re there yet.” Another teacher then commented on his reticence to share his views for concern of potential parental outrage. He shared,

I’ve had a lot of life experiences and I’ve been in many different places in the world, and yet I find a huge reluctance to share my beliefs with the students for fear of parental wrath coming down on me. And I will not share [these experiences] with the students and I don’t know FACetime makes them more Global Citizens. I think this is certainly possible, but what Diane said earlier, that maybe one of the last things we try to develop. I’m very reticent about sharing my opinions about what I think responsible Global Citizens should be as that may be contrary to what their parents believe a global citizen should be.

Another teacher shared her thoughts about how this long-term outcome was being met. She said,

Looking at it from the characteristics of a graduate that Virginia has put out there, that one of the key components of it is they are going to be Global Citizens and I think everything we do is designed to prepare them for that. And I think the lessons we’ve been creating talking about things from diversity to awareness of different issues and things like that is preparing them. So, I think we are meeting that goal.

One teacher shared his thoughts regarding the advisory’s approach to teaching students to be effective Global Citizens.

I don’t think it’s specific to just how they can be Global Citizens, I think what we’ve really talked about always is just to be open-minded and to be receptive. If you can really encourage kids to open their minds and not stay locked in a viewpoint or in their mindset

and start to open and receive what's around them, I think that can help them be better Global Citizens because maybe they'll be more curious to seek some things out. Maybe they're willing to give it a little bit more time, think about it, process it a little bit, and learn a little bit.

Teacher focus groups shared differing thoughts on the extent to which teachers were prepared to help students become effective global citizens. Those not at the long-term level indicated they were focused on short-term and mid-term outcomes. One focus group, including all six teachers, indicated they all felt prepared to accomplish this long-term outcome with students.

Summary

Teachers participating in the teacher focus groups all indicated they felt prepared with the organizational structures, materials, and processes of the advisory. However, teachers did indicate a need for additional training on how to deliver some lessons, especially regarding diversity. Teachers acknowledged that some teachers may be more comfortable teaching and leading lessons on diversity than others. One teacher pointed out, "I teach Psychology so there's not a topic that's going to come up that I'm going to be worried about, but that's not going to be true for everybody." Teacher responses on the teacher survey did present a more varied response to teachers' views regarding their preparedness to conduct the advisory. Whereas the majority of teacher respondents on the survey felt they were prepared to effectively conduct the lessons, nearly 23% of teachers indicated they did not believe the advisory lessons could be implemented easily, and 15.9% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were capable of facilitating their FACETIME group discussions.

Regarding short-term outcomes for the advisory, the teacher focus group participants all felt they were able to connect with advisees and help them feel more connected to the school. As for mid-term outcomes pertaining to student cultural competency, most of the teacher focus group participants, 83%, felt they were capable of effectively helping their advisees to become more culturally competent. Regarding long-term outcomes, helping students become effective Global Citizens, the teacher focus groups were split. Teachers who taught global studies, literature, or music were more comfortable indicating their confidence to work with students in this regard. Other teachers were concerned with how best to convey this to students and indicated they were not sure or comfortable regarding how to proceed with discussions of this nature with concern that they may offend students and parents.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Student connectedness to schools is a vital component to student academic success and positive social and emotional growth (Forte & Schurr, 1993). One strategy schools are using to enhance and improve student connectedness is through the use of student advisories. Advisories are intended to help students positively connect with an adult and a group of students in the school. Advisory implementation can look different from school to school or district to district, however, there are common components that researchers have identified that advisories should include if they are to be meaningful, purposeful, and successful in the school. Such components include having clear goals, meeting regularly and often, effectively training all teachers to be advisors, providing all necessary materials and directions for advisory lessons, and ensuring the advisory size is appropriate and not too large (Railsback, 2004; Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994).

Advisories are not new to the education system, however, as school connectedness and school safety have become important elements and focuses for schools especially in the past two decades, schools are seeking strategies to ensure all of their students feel connected to their school (Blum, 2005). This mixed-methods program evaluation was conducted in one high school to assess the program's short-term outcomes, to determine the benefits to participants, and to provide feedback to stakeholders responsible for the program's implementation. Findings and recommendations from this study will assist this high school with improving the efficacy of its advisory program. Also, the findings and recommendations may be useful to stakeholders in

other schools and school districts seeking information on advisories and advisory implementation.

Discussion of Findings

This program evaluation included extant survey data from the spring of 2019 collected from both teachers and students, as well as teacher focus groups conducted in the fall of 2020. Creswell (2014) indicates that surveys are useful research tools used to identify general indicators of the target population. Gill et al. (2008) indicate that focus groups provide researchers with the ability to speak to a group to concentrate on a specific topic of research. The findings in this study represent responses from student and teacher participants about their experiences in the advisory program as it was delivered and suggestions for improvement. Additionally, a sampling of teachers participated in focus groups to learn what elements of the program they perceive to be most beneficial and those that were least beneficial. Teachers were asked to share their perceptions of their preparedness to support students in the program to meet short term and long-term program goals.

Participants' Experiences in the Program

The findings related to student and teacher experiences in the program suggest several themes. The findings were determined through both qualitative and quantitative sources.

Qualitative Findings. Extant student and staff surveys regarding the school's FACETIME advisory from 2018-2019 school provided qualitative data. Both surveys asked students and staff for suggestions for the student advisory. Student and staff responses were uploaded into Dedoose, a coding program. The data were coded and analyzed for emerging themes. The data were then further coded by hand to identify specific themes. Teacher focus groups, conducted in November 2020, also provided qualitative data regarding the student advisory. Transcriptions of

the focus groups were uploaded into Dedoose then coded to identify emerging themes. The transcriptions were further coded by hand to identify specific themes.

Quantitative Findings. Extant student and staff surveys from 2018-2019 provided quantitative data. Student data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The overall mean, range between grade levels, and standard deviation for all grades were determined for each question to ascertain the variability of the data set. The smaller the range and standard deviation, the more closely aligned the data set. Staff survey data were also analyzed using descriptive statistics. As the teacher survey was not separated into smaller groups, as the students were in grades, the mean for all responses was determined for each survey question. Emergent themes in this category included program relevance, program activities, advisory grade levels and size, teacher professional development, and teacher support.

Program Relevance

Blum (2005) indicates that schools can more effectively connect with their students when the schools ensure that the content taught is relevant to the students. Railsback (2004) stressed the importance of advisories having clear goals that all stakeholders can understand. In addition, Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) and Wall (2013) separately found that schools implementing advisory must reflect upon their practices and make any needed modifications. An analysis of the data from this study's surveys and focus groups showed program relevance as an identified theme from participants. All twelve focus group teachers in this study indicated that they believed the content taught in the advisory was relevant to the needs of the students and school. Teacher survey respondents mentioned advisory relevance, but usually through their perceptions that students did not participate in advisory if the students felt the advisory topic was not relevant to them. Along with those findings, when asked for suggestions for advisory, 91 students (14%)

indicated on the student survey that the advisory needed to be more relevant to them, and 156 students (24%) indicated the program should be terminated. Again, since most students only provided one suggestion or recommendation on the survey, these were two of the top four responses given by the students. Considering this information, there appears to be a potential misalignment with the program relevance as perceived by teacher advisors and student advisees. The differences in teacher and student perceptions may be due to a number of factors including the level of understanding each group has regarding the purpose of the advisory, the different perspectives each group has regarding advisory topic relevancy, and the active engagement each group has with advisory. Teachers, by nature of being an advisory leader, must be prepared to lead an advisory lesson and engage their advisees, whereas, students may choose to participate passively with limited or no engagement.

Along with the differing teacher and overall student mean perceptions regarding advisory relevancy, there existed a further disparity among student perceptions as well. The data revealed that 12th-grade students demonstrated the lowest perception of advisory relevance for all grades, while ninth grade student respondents demonstrated the highest perceptions of relevancy. As the 12th-grade students had been involved in advisory for all 4 years of their high school experience, this finding was notable. Possible explanations for the waning perception of advisory relevancy could be due to seniors being ready to leave high school having become fatigued or disinterested with the discussions and lessons offered in their advisory. They might have found advisory lessons, if similar to lessons from prior years, redundant and dull. This could also explain why 10th and 11th graders demonstrated a reduction in their perceptions of the relevancy of the program. Students might have found being with the same students year after year tiresome as well. Lastly, the 12th graders, who were in their last semester of their high school career when

completing the advisory survey, might have been less engaged in high school compared to students in other grade levels and could have found programs like advisory less beneficial and too juvenile for them. As Conrad (2005) found in her work with seniors partnering with elementary school students for a writing project, providing seniors with purposeful and engaging lessons they deemed important and consequential helped keep seniors focused and involved.

As for the ninth graders recording higher levels of relevancy for the advisory, it could be that the program was new for them and the subject matter discussed in advisory may have been topics that elementary and middle schools never touched upon or discussed with the students. There may have existed more interest and intrigue with being a high school student and being able to discuss topics that were considered more mature. Shulkind and Foote (2009) found that advisories provided students and teachers the opportunity to discuss matters that otherwise may not be discussed in regular classes. Also, the teachers with whom ninth graders were assigned as advisors may have been more nurturing and engaging with their advisees while assisting them with their transition to high school. Conversely, teachers of senior advisories, sensing the seniors' lack of interest and pending decampment from high school, might also have reduced their attempts, deeming them futile, to keep their advisees involved.

Program Activities

Advisory activities were another notable element brought up by stakeholders. Students, with 100 responses on the student survey, or 16%, indicated the need for improved and more engaging advisory activities. This was the second most suggested topic students provided on the survey. Blum (2005) indicates students need experiential, hands-on activities with a wide variety of instructional methods and technologies to help them engage in activities. Railsback (2004) found schools can implement advisory using different themes, however, it is important for the

school to create an advisory that meets its needs. A teacher in the focus group explained what he does to enhance his advisory,

If there's any downtime, I've found some TED talks about procrastination and different things. I know as far as those things we are presented with, we need to talk to the students, but I just find that it's fun for me to think about the group and maybe other things that I would enjoy presenting.

Such advisor decisions to extend their advisory's experiences by incorporating additional pertinent information for their advisees are supported by the findings of Corso et al. (2013). They found that student engagement is increased when students' thoughts and beliefs are considered along with identifying relevant topics that students would find useful. Since there are many types of advisory programs and topics for teacher and students to discuss, Railsback (2004) indicates schools must identify those topics which are relevant to their school community.

Peer Relationships

Groves and Welsh (2010) found that peer relationships in schools were important to student success. To facilitate peer interaction in the school, Mountain Springs initiated FAcetime with mixed grade levels and then, based on feedback from teachers and the Equity team, moved to grade-level specific advisories. The findings in this study suggests that both students and staff members desire to return to mixed grade level advisories. Students shared their desire to meet students who they did not know and who were in other grade levels. Everhart (2016) noted a heightened level of empathy in students when they were able to learn more about other individual's lives. The results of this study suggest that students are seeking those opportunities and yearning for that experience. Also, Swart et al. (2010) indicate that cross group friendships had positive effects on students' views of others, increased affective empathy, and

reduced intergroup anxiety. In the minority for this study were those students and staff who appreciated the single grade level since topics could be more focused on developmental needs, however, most students and staff sharing their thoughts regarding this indicated that mixed grades were beneficial for all involved. The rationale most often stated were all students were able to meet students they otherwise probably would not have met. Also noted by students and teachers were the benefits of older students helping younger students in the advisory serving as a potential peer mentor.

Ziegler and Mulhall (1994) indicate advisories should not include more than 15 students for each advisor so the advisor could know and understand the needs of each advisee well. Mountain Springs kept such a ratio since the advisory's inception, however, based on recommendations from teachers to provide each advisory with classroom space, the school made a change in 2018-2019 and began teaming two advisors with their students in classrooms or other larger spaces in the building. Student and staff responses indicated a desire to return to smaller groups. Students indicated they did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in front of a large group of their peers, and teachers noted a drop-off in student participation when this change occurred. Even though there have been two adults to work with the students in each advisory, having them separate, in smaller groups and different locations, appears to be more beneficial for the students and teachers.

Teacher Participants' Preparedness

As Cole (1994) indicates, teachers are the most important component to the success of a student advisory program. For the program to thrive, teachers must be prepared and trained to effectively carry out the vision of the advisory (Moeini, 2008). Teacher survey results and teacher focus group participants indicated that teachers understand the purpose of the advisory.

Teachers stated that faculty meeting training, which included reviewing upcoming FACETIME lessons and circle training, were beneficial to their understanding of how to conduct the lesson. Teachers also indicated advisory resources were readily made available to them with clear instructions. However, teachers further indicated a need for more focused and in-depth training especially for those who may not be as comfortable leading student advisories. As Anfara and Brown (2001) pointed out, a successful advisory is dependent upon the teacher's ability to both implement and convey to students the advisory curriculum. Of note, both teacher focus groups discussed the importance of teachers showing vulnerability to their advisees. Molloy and Bearman (2019) found when reciprocal vulnerability exists in the classroom, whereby teachers reveal their fallibility to their students, a more trusting classroom environment results and students are more apt to be more open and engaged with both their teacher and their peers. Teachers felt those teachers who were able to do show their vulnerability were perceived as more empathetic and relatable to students. Teachers surmised that students then felt more comfortable sharing and taking risks within the advisory group. Teachers also recognized that this aspect of leading an advisory may be very difficult for some teachers who are accustomed to being viewed as secure, knowledgeable, and to some degree, unerring individuals. This aligned with Van Hoose's findings (as cited in Cole, 1994) that some teachers do not want to participate in advisory because they are uncomfortable sharing personal information about themselves. Teachers described the ability to show vulnerability as teachers being able to display a weakness or being perceived as unknowledgeable in front of their students. For example, in order to create connections with their advisees, teachers discussed how some teachers may have a difficult time sharing their own personal stories about how they may have struggled during their life. Teachers shared their perceptions that some of their colleagues prefer to be viewed as strong, organized,

and well-informed, and that displaying any quality less than that would be embarrassing and uncomfortable. The teacher focus groups discussed the importance of providing professional development, for which they were not familiar if any such professional development existed, for teachers that would help enable them to understand how to demonstrate vulnerability with their students while also effectively putting such a quality into practice.

Teacher Support

The teacher is the key component in the success of a student advisory (Anfara & Brown, 2001). Considering that, teacher support and buy-in is paramount for the advisory's success. The twelve teacher focus group participants all indicated support for the advisory, yet with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Two participants shared their early doubts about the program and their reluctance to embrace its purpose when it first began. Teacher extant survey results were much more varied with 29.5% of teacher respondents indicating they supported FACetime, 34.1% indicating neutrality, and 36.3% designating they disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. This discrepancy amongst teachers must be further assessed. If teachers are not supportive of the program, then likely, the program will not be successful, especially for those students who may be assigned to a teacher who does not support the program. A potential cause for the variability in this collected data was that the principal of the school was this study's researcher and conducted the teacher focus groups. Despite the researcher's efforts to have teachers share their honest thoughts, some teachers still may have felt uncomfortable doing so and may not have been as candid and upfront had the researcher and focus group facilitator not been the school principal.

Implications for Policy or Practice

Student connectedness with schools will continue to be a factor in student academic success and social and emotional well-being. Amid the current pandemic, evidence of the important role schools play in the lives and well-being of adolescents has become clearly evident (Powell, 2020). Students advisories, in which teachers or other adults in the school create meaningful relationships with students for the purpose of helping the students feel more connected with the school, will continue to be a strategy schools can implement.

This program evaluation researched one school's advisory and its relevance, benefits, and teacher preparedness. When established at this school, the advisory was new to the school's stakeholders. Grover (2016) indicates that all stakeholders must understand why a change or program is being implemented. Cole (1994) found that teachers are the most important influence on the success of a student advisory. Considering the perceptions of the teacher focus group participants, the school has a foundation upon which to continue to build and improve its program. However, based upon the results of this study, the results were mixed and conflicting regarding stakeholders' understanding of the program from the perspectives of both students and teachers. Student responses provided results that demonstrated students want a more engaging and purposeful advisory with relevant lessons that provide them the opportunity to meet other grade level students in the school. Likewise, teachers provided similar feedback regarding the mixed grade levels, however, teacher focus group respondents shared more positive insights for the advisory program and deemed it was on a purposeful trajectory.

Nevertheless, based upon the results of this study, results show that students, especially in the upper grades, do not view advisory to be a significant factor for helping them feel more connected to the school. Although there were examples of students supporting the advisory,

those student responses were in the minority. A total of 107 student survey respondents (17%) did not respond with suggestions; however, that feedback cannot be construed or interpreted either positively or negatively about the advisory program from those responses. For the ninth grade, this was the leading response, garnering 24% of all responses for this question. Fifteen total students responded with specific positive remarks for the advisory program, such as one ninth grader who shared, “Seems pretty good as it is.” An 11th grader responded with, “I LOVE FACE TIME,” and another remarked, “It is perfect.” In addition, a few students recommended that food, snacks, or candy were important factors for the advisory program insofar as food was a motivator for engagement as one senior noted, “allow for food so that there is something else we can bond over besides the topic itself.”

Based upon the study results from both students and teachers, possible reasons for this conclusion include lack of teacher support of the program due to the advisory being viewed simply as another non-instructional task to do, lack of teacher support or effective advisory implementation due to apprehension to discuss controversial topics with students, a shortfall of effective and targeted teacher training to assist teachers with facilitating potentially controversial topics in advisory, student perceptions of non-relevant advisory topics, student perceptions of non-engaging advisory lessons, students’ lack of understanding of the purpose of the advisory, the lack of meaningful relationships between the students and their teacher advisor, the advisory did not meet often enough, too much change was enacted from year to year based upon annual student and teacher survey results, an absence of appropriate administrative leadership and guidance for program planning and implementation, and the school did not create a clear sense of urgency that the advisory was needed. Kotter’s (2015) first step for instituting successful change includes creating a sense of urgency. Because most students in this school generally perform

satisfactorily academically and behaviorally, despite the school's Equity and leadership's efforts to show a need for a student advisory through discipline, attendance, academic, and demographic statistics, it is possible that both students and teachers still did not consider the advisory program necessary.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

Findings from this study will be shared with the school's Equity and leadership teams. As of the 2020-2021 school year, Mountain Springs' school district now requires all secondary schools to include Advisory in each school's schedule. The school has a foundation from which to build and enhance the program. Recommendations based upon the findings are as follows:

1. Evaluate advisory lessons for relevance to include specific objectives of identifying lessons, themes, styles of delivery, that were either effective or ineffective. This review will be conducted by the school's Equity and leadership teams, students, teachers, and parents.
2. Review and evaluate all advisory activities for relevancy and engagement. This review will be conducted by the school's Equity and leadership teams, students, teachers, and parents.
3. Conduct student focus groups to provide insights and feedback regarding advisory relevance and activities. These groups, which will include students from all grade levels will be conducted by the schools Equity and leadership teams. Developmental needs for each grade level can be determined, and lessons can be created to address the needs of students who are at different developmental stages of their lives.
4. Create teacher professional development trainings that support teachers who are struggling with their advisories. Teachers will self-identify or teachers will be

identified through observations conducted by Equity and school leadership team members. Trainings will be conducted by teachers and Equity team members.

5. Create an advisory orientation and training for new teachers to the school. Equity and leadership team members, along with teachers and students can create and lead the orientation for new teachers.

The evaluation of advisory lessons for relevancy and engagement by all stakeholders will provide critical information and suggestions for improving the advisory. In addition, the student focus groups will provide more specific feedback regarding what issues students deem relevant and activities they find engaging. Provided this feedback, further discussions, and determinations of what activities students and staff find engaging and those activities they do not find engaging are needed. Buskist and Groccia (2018) indicate that student engagement is a responsibility that must be shared by students, teachers, and administrators. For example, both student and teacher responses included recommendations for activities and lessons that included more than just PowerPoint presentations. Activities where students were able to meet and get to know other students from different grade levels, schoolwide trivia competitions between advisories, and time for advisories to discuss their own designated topics were examples of recommendations. Also, the professional development will be based upon the identified needs of the teachers. New teachers to the school have not experienced the advisory or know its history. In addition, new teachers have not received all the trainings that veteran staff received and refresher trainings may not serve as useful substitutes for these teachers. Moeini (2008) found that effective professional development is based upon needs. Rather than apply a professional development for all staff pertaining to advisory, differentiating the advisor training for teacher needs would be more effective.

Considering each teacher's disposition, their prior experiences with such programs, and their skills to meaningfully connect with their advisees, are aspects of the advisory the Equity Team and school leadership should consider. As teachers in the focus groups pointed out, advisory is a difficult time for some teachers as they are not comfortable connecting with students outside of their instructional content area. Although professional development can be provided to teachers needing help with this, the advisory leadership team may determine giving those teachers other assignments may be more beneficial to both the teacher and their advisees.

The school should also consider identifying advisory exemplars within the school. That is those advisories which students feel more connected to the school through their advisory and their relationship with their advisor. The teacher focus groups noted the importance of looping with their advisees for all four years. Baran (2008) found that advisories that looped advisors and advisees were more successful and students felt more connected to their advisor. The practice of looping for advisories that are successful certainly may be beneficial, however, the school must consider the experiences and ramifications of students looping with advisors and advisories that are not successful or well connected. Table 12 shows the findings and recommendations from this study.

Table 12*Study Recommendations Based on Findings*

Finding	Related Recommendation
PD is perceived as effective by teachers when it includes time for learning, teacher choice, collaboration and other research-based practices such as active learning.	Protect teacher time for professional learning and collaboration opportunities.
Teacher confidence and belief in their abilities can be positively impacted by engaging in a combination of sources of efficacy such as mastery experiences and emotional arousal.	Provide opportunities for teachers to experience the four sources of self-efficacy, specifically mastery experiences and emotional arousal.
Excitement is most effective when motivating teachers and increasing their confidence.	
Teachers can direct their own learning and desire ongoing opportunities to learn.	Create a system change that links PD to teacher evaluation through a formative process.
Teacher choice of PD makes learning relevant to classroom needs.	Include a strategy of teachers involved in action research as PD.

Note. PD = Professional Development

Fifteen students responded on the survey with positive remarks for the program. Studying those successful advisories may provide additional information and strategies for the leadership teams to provide other staff members needing support. One responsibility that Shulkind and Foote (2009) indicate an advisor must do, monitor the academic success of their advisees, was absent in student and teacher survey responses as well as teacher focus group responses. Considering the absence of this significant aspect of advisory, the school should assess whether it is allotting time in advisory for these important conversations and what guidance and support it has provided teachers to facilitate such discussions.

The school should also reassess the structure of the advisory and the number of planned advisory lessons teachers deliver. Teacher focus group participants indicated that the advisory was organized and structured almost to a fault. Having an advisory lesson each day for some was overwhelming. Teachers in the focus groups discussed having more time to let students talk

freely and openly about issues the students wanted to discuss. The school should continue having advisory meet at least once per week, however, it should consider providing advisors and advisees time to generate their own discussions and activities.

The implications for this study are important for this school and for other schools seeking to initiate a student advisory. Based on the results of this study, and considering the schools attempt to adhere and implement advisory recommendations, and implement change, the program is clearly part of the school routine and practice. The organization, clarity of lessons, and availability of materials and supplies of the advisory was noted, especially by teacher focus group participants, as being sound. However, despite these qualities of the program and its prominence in the school, it has not been wholly embraced by all stakeholders as part of its culture. Further assessment needs to be conducted on this to identify specific actions the school can take to create a more relevant, engaging, and purposeful advisory program for its students. The school also should consider if all teachers should be advisors. While the school seeks professional development training for teachers who are confident with teaching their content but reticent to venture beyond their area of expertise to work with students, the school may consider having those staff members serve in another capacity in the school during advisory.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon Cole's (1994) study of the consequential influence teachers have on advisory, further research into the role of teachers and their perceptions would be beneficial. A study of those teachers who are having success in advisory, based upon feedback from both the teacher and the advisory students, could provide specific feedback regarding the role the teacher plays in creating an effective advisory. From that information, professional development for teachers could be created to help other teachers learn and expand upon their skills to improve

their own advisory experience for their students and themselves. Shulkind and Foote (2009) indicated that constructive information can be acquired by such studies. Furthermore, asking teachers more specific questions regarding why they support or do not support the advisory would be purposeful. Also, asking teachers to provide specific feedback on what support or training they need to help them lead their advisory would be valuable. Teachers did state that professional development for staff members who do not feel comfortable showing vulnerability in front of their students would be beneficial. What that training would entail and how best to deliver it would be valuable.

Asking students more specific questions about their experiences with their teacher and their advisory groups would be useful research as well. Considering that most advisory lessons were the same at this study site, the result was that some students found advisory purposeful and enjoyable while others did not. As Cole (1994) indicated, a key variable to that outcome is the teacher. Shulkind and Foote (2009) provide three specific characteristics that successful advisors must do to increase student connectedness: know and care about their advisees, closely supervise their advisees' academic progress, and be problem solvers and advice givers to their advisees. Further research through student focus groups, surveys, and direct observations of teachers both having success and struggling could give insights on those necessary characteristics needed for a more meaningful advisory experience for students and teachers.

Further investigations on how often advisory meets and what activities take place in the advisory would be useful information as well. Ziegler and Mulhall (1994) indicated that advisories should meet daily, however, findings from this study's teacher focus group suggests that having a planned advisory lesson daily was too much. Teachers stated that having a planned lesson for every advisory lesson seemed to cause students to disengage and not participate. They

further indicated that by delivering a lesson every day, the objectives of the advisory lessons were not met due to the constant dissemination of information to students. Teachers recommended one key lesson a week that teachers and students would focus upon in advisory. An evaluation of the advisory structure, and to what extent advisory teachers have voice and choice on how to facilitate their advisory, could enhance the available research for advisories.

Researching students' thoughts on what they believe a purposeful advisory is and asking for more specific details could provide important insights for how to organize and create an effective school-wide advisory. This study asked students for suggestions for the advisory to which most students responded with one suggestion. Student focus groups, with students from all grade levels, could provide invaluable insights regarding advisory quality, relevance, and benefits. Also, asking graduates of the school their thoughts, feedback, and recommendations, after they have been away from the school for some time, could also be a focus of future research and prove to be beneficial advisory research for others to consider.

Summary

This study sought to evaluate the quality, relevance, benefits, and teacher preparedness of a student advisory in a high school setting. The student advisory is one strategy that schools can use to help students feel more connected to the school. Student connectedness is important for student academic, social, and emotional well-being. Students having success in high school can use this strong foundation to build upon as then enter the next chapter of their lives.

The results of the study provided feedback on the successes and challenges of the student advisory as shared by advisees and advisors in the program. The results from student surveys indicated that understanding of the school's advisory was not overly clear and that the advisory needed to be more relevant and engaging. Teachers indicated they understood the relevance of

the program, however, more relevant topics for students and additional professional development for teachers on how best to successfully deliver advisory lessons, while establishing positive relationships with their advisory students, would be helpful. Teachers also indicated the organization of the advisory was sound, however, further discussion and study was needed on how often the advisory should meet to be most effective. School leaders can now use this research to make decisions on how best to improve the advisory. Schools seeking to implement advisory may learn from this school's experience and use research to help guide their own advisory implementation.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Mountain Springs FACetime Lessons

Phase # 1 Lesson # 2

Title: Who are we?

Objective(s): To engage students in a relationship-building activity that started with Lesson #1 and will lay the groundwork for fostering student and staff relationships through a community agreement.

*Key Points (Listening, self-disclosure, values, etc.) Establishing relationships

Agenda:

- Advisory teachers need to return the index cards to students from Lesson #1. Each student will verbally share their card. Round robin format. All share.
- Today we will engage in an activity that will help us get to know one another better. We will be creating and developing our community agreement to foster conversations about topics of greater significance.
- Do you have a space where you feel you can be yourself and openly share your perspectives? If so, what are one or two qualities of that space that makes it possible? Teachers may elect to have students write their answers down, share in open forum, brainstorm and write ideas on board, verbal discussion.

Materials: index cards from Lesson #1, Video = Personal Journey/ Personal Culture video, Classroom maze (created by the FACetime leader - can be simple and should be within the parameters of the room...walking up and down the rows, finding your way from the teacher to the classroom door), and large sheet of paper.

Lesson Directions:

1. Each student will verbally share their card. Round robin format. All share.
2. Two options are given, you may do one or both, your choice.

Option #1: Show video = Personal Journey/ Personal Culture

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFCm10aX6gE>)

- Using the chart paper provided write two positive agreements we can make that would allow you to feel safe and open enough to share your perspectives and experiences with the group, like the students in the video.

- Decide as a group where this flip chart paper will be displayed. The FACETIME leader should post this large sheet of paper in the building by the end of the day.

Option #2: Find a partner within your FACETIME group. Have students lead each other through mazes with one student keeping their eyes closed and then switching roles.

- Using the large paper provided write two positive agreements we can make that would allow you to feel safe and open enough to share your perspectives and experiences with the group, like the students in the video.
- Decide as a group where this flip chart paper will be displayed. The FACETIME leader should post this large sheet of paper in the building by the end of the day.

Suggested Supplemental questions/activities:

Questions from Option #1

Working together as a group what are two positive agreements we can make that would allow you to feel safe and open enough to share your perspectives and experiences with our group, like the students in the video. Each FACETIME group will write their responses on a large sheet of paper.

Questions from Option #2:

How did the person whose eyes were closed feel about the activity?

What did the partner do to make you feel safe?

Is there something that could have been done differently to make you feel safer?

Questions from Option #2:

How did the person whose eyes were closed feel about the activity?

What did the partner do to make you feel safe?

Is there something that could have been done differently to make you feel safer?

Facetime Lesson Plan

Phase # 2 Lesson # 4

TITLE: Cultural Toss

OBJECTIVES: The students will acknowledge each person's unique cultural beliefs based on narratives and experiences, deepening understanding of our differences and strengths.

***Key Points:** Explore the diversity among group members by sharing thoughts and experiences and listening to different perspectives of what is valued in daily life.

AGENDA:

- Introduction ask what makes you unique and valuable?
- Cultural toss activity using post it notes displayed on the body.
- Discuss the individual choices and how the group is different and how the group is the same.
- The zombies have made going to school at Mountain Springs a dangerous situation and you must give up two of your identifying factors to be safe. Discuss what each would give up and why.
- Repeat: The zombies have made going to school at Mountain Springs an even more dangerous situation and you must give up two more of your identifying factors to be safe. Discuss what each would give up and why.
- Discuss what is left and what these identities say about who you are.
- Wrap- Up Activity: Each student will make a "truth" sign about something they have learned or how knowing one another better can make us stronger.

MATERIALS: 2 packages of "Post It Notes," 1 sheet of paper per student and markers for exit slips or "truths." (Optional: a camera or phone to record each student or a group photo and their "truth" signs at the end.)

LESSON DIRECTIONS:

1. Begin in large group for discussion of what makes each unique and valuable, pointing out that sometimes it takes courage to let others know of your differences or beliefs. Ask about when it would be difficult to "be different." How could being very different be scary or empowering?
2. Give each student 6 Post-It Notes. Explain that you will ask them each to write a response on the post-it notes that explain a little about who they uniquely are.
3. First category - What is your race or ethnicity. Ask the students to post their response on themselves after each question. They will be wearing their identities.
4. Second - What language do you communicate with or feel strongly about?
5. Third - What is your religion/spirituality?
6. Fourth - What is your favorite way to spend your free time?
7. Fifth - What do you value most in your life?
8. Sixth - What is a possession you like very much?
9. Discuss the idea that what they have put on themselves in their responses, shows a little bit about who they are and what makes them unique and valuable.
10. Now explain that zombies have taken over Mountain Springs and made it a very dangerous place. You must give up two of these responses that identify who you are,

to keep yourself safe. Take off two post-its. What would you be willing to give up and why?

11. Repeat #10 - zombies have become even more evil and have made our community an even more dangerous place to be. To keep yourself safe, you must give up two more of these responses that identify who you are. Take off two more post-it notes. What would you be willing to give up and why?
12. Let each person explain why he or she gave up what they did. What does it leave and what does it say about who they are. Are the responses the same or did they choose different things to hold onto? Explain how are we better or stronger knowing more about one another?

Wrap-Up Activity: Give each person a sheet of paper and a marker. Ask the students to write a phrase that they feel is a truth about cultural awareness and our likeness/differences from one another. These can be collected as exit slips and posted all together or a picture of each student with their "truth" could be taken and posted.

APPENDIX B

Student FACETIME Survey

2018-2019 Student FACETIME Survey

Structured responses based on a Likert Scale:

1- Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 – Neutral 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

1. My FACETIME advisors help to guide our FACETIME discussions.
2. If your group has a student leader: our student leader helps to guide our FACETIME discussions.
3. I look forward to FACETIME.
4. I participate in FACETIME activities.
5. The FACETIME topics are meaningful and relevant to high school students.
6. Students in my FACETIME participate in discussions.
7. My FACETIME teachers play a positive role in FACETIME activities/discussions.
8. I've thought about a topic that was discussed in FACETIME and had conversations with my friends about the topic.
9. I feel comfortable talking in my FACETIME setting.
10. I understand the purpose of FACETIME. (Response Choices: Yes, No, Unsure)

Unstructured Responses.

11. A suggestion I have for FACETIME

APPENDIX C

Teacher FACetime Survey

2018-2019 FACetime Staff Survey

Structured responses based on a Likert Scale:

1- Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 – Neutral 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

1. I understand the purpose of FACetime.
2. The FACetime activities/discussions can be implemented easily.
3. I support FACetime.
4. I can talk easily with the students in my FACetime group.
5. I feel capable of facilitating my FACetime group discussions.
6. Student leaders play a positive role in the FACetime group.
7. How would you rate the discussion occurring in your FACetime group?
 - a. We have open discussion that are important.
 - b. Our discussion are focused on the particular objective.
 - c. Discussions are limited.
 - d. Students do not really share in my FACetime.
8. There is adequate monitoring of FACetime.
9. Both adults play an active role in FACetime on a consistent basis.

Unstructured responses:

10. FACetime can be improved by:

APPENDIX D

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Due to the current situation and school closure because of COVID-19, the Teacher Focus Group met virtually using Google Meet. Staff were selected through purposeful selection and agreed to participate in the focus group. The link to the focus group was sent to all participants the day of the meeting.

Opening remarks for the Teacher Focus Group.

Good morning, I am Sam Shipp and I am conducting a study of this school's advisory program. I also am conducting this as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the doctorate degree in Educational Leadership with the College of William and Mary. Thank you for participating in our teacher focus group this afternoon. You have been selected to participate since you have been involved with the advisory program at this school since its inception and implementation. This study is focusing on short range outcomes of the advisory and whether it enhances student-connectedness to the school. Our questions today will focus on your preparation for leading your advisory group, your perceptions of the advisory, your perceptions of student engagement in the advisory, and your thoughts and suggestions for the advisory. Although I am the principal of this high school, I ask that you think of me during this focus group as the researcher. Please speak honestly about your thoughts regarding the questions I ask.

I will pose each question to the group and ask each of you to respond. Our meeting is being recorded so that the information you share can be recorded and analyzed for this study. Thank you and we'll now begin with our first question.

APPENDIX E

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What is the vision of FACETIME? What are the expected outcomes of FACETIME?
2. What elements of FACETIME do you believe are most beneficial?
3. What elements of FACETIME do you believe are least beneficial?
4. What training and support have you received in preparation for your role as a FACETIME advisor?
5. How prepared do you feel to implement FACETIME to help students feel more connected to the school (Short-term outcome)?
6. How prepared do you feel to implement FACETIME to help students become culturally competent? (Medium-term outcome)?
7. How prepared do you feel to implement FACETIME to help students become effective global citizens (Long-term outcome)?
8. Do you believe FACETIME helps students create positive student to student relationships? Why or why not?
9. Do you believe FACETIME helps students and teachers create positive relationships with each other? Why or why not?
10. Do you believe FACETIME at our school is well organized with a well-defined structure and purpose? Please give examples.
11. What suggestions do you have for improving FACETIME's quality, products, and services?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add or share?

APPENDIX F

Teacher Focus Group Agreement

Informed Consent Agreement - Teacher Focus Group

Research Participation Informed Consent Form

School of Education Department

The College of William and Mary

Protocol # EDIRC – 2020-10-28-14606

Title: A Program Evaluation of a High School Student Advisory Program

Principal Investigators: William S. Shipp

This is to certify that I, _____ have been given the following information with respect to my participation in this study:

1. The purpose of this research study is to determine:

- How do students in the program rate the quality, relevance, and utility of the program activities, products, and services?
- What suggestions do program stakeholders and beneficiaries have for improving the program's quality, products, and services?
- Which elements of the program do program stakeholders and beneficiaries find most beneficial, and which least beneficial?
- What are teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the program in support of short-term and long-term outcomes?

2. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a teacher focus group and respond to structured and open-ended questions regarding this school's advisory.

3. There are no known risks associated with this study.

4. Participation in this study will take approximately 2 hours.

5. Your participation is confidential. The data you contribute to this research will be identifiable only by a number assigned by the experimenter. There will be no way to connect your

responses with your personal identity. Moreover, all data and records will be stored on password-protected computers and your data will be anonymous. Your data will not be associated with your name or any code so that your responses can not be linked to your name in any way.

6. Participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You may choose to skip any question or activity.
7. Participants will not be compensated for their participation.
8. There are no known benefits of participating in the study. However, your participation in this research will contribute to the development of our understanding about this high school's advisory.
9. Termination of participation: Participation may be terminated by the experimenter if it is deemed that the participant is unable to perform the tasks presented.
10. Questions or concerns regarding participation in this research should be directed to: Dr. Margaret E. Constantino, Director of Executive Ed.D. Programs, The College of William and Mary 757-221-2323.

I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this project.

I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this study to Dr. Thomas Ward, Professor and Chair, Educational Policy, Planning & Leadership by telephone (757-221-2358) or email (tjward@wm.edu).

I agree to participate in this study and have read all the information provided on this form.

My signature below confirms that my participation in this project is voluntary, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____date_____

Signature

_____date_____

Witness

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

(Phone: 757-221-3966) ON [2020-11-10] AND EXPIRES ON [2021-11-10]

APPENDIX G

Survey Permissions

Reply Reply All Forward

WS William Shipp bashcraft@access.k12.wv.us 12/29/2017

Teacher-Advisor Beliefs Survey

Dr. Ashcraft,

Good afternoon – I hope all is well! I am currently working on my dissertation and came across your dissertation on student advisories. My dissertation is a program evaluation of a student advisory in a high school. The Teacher-Advisor Beliefs Survey (TABS) you created connects very well with my study. I believe you found this to be a valid and reliable instrument. This survey instrument for teachers, with some modifications to connect directly with our advisory, would be very useful. I am requesting permission to use your survey – please let me know if this is possible. With sincerest regards, Sam Shipp, Principal, Woodgrove High School

Reply Reply All Forward

VP Vicky Poole <vickypoole.wdm@gmail.com> William Shipp 2/1/2018

Re: Greetings!

You replied to this message on 2/2/2018 9:52 AM.

Aloha!

I returned today from my annual month on Oahu. (Retirement is a very good thing.)

You have my permission to use my survey. I loved doing the research. An interesting note: I was hired one August to implement an advisory program in a large high school whose faculty voted the previous spring to NOT implement an advisory program.) Fun Times.

Vicky

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 14, 2018, at 1:05 PM, William Shipp <William.Shipp@lcps.org> wrote:

Dr. Poole,

Good afternoon - I hope all is well! My name is Sam Shipp and I am currently a high school principal at Woodgrove High School, in Loudoun County, Virginia. I also am a doctoral candidate at the College of William and Mary and am conducting research on an advisory program we have at our school. While researching advisories, I found your dissertation on advisories and your student questionnaire. I am asking for your permission to use the student survey you created for your work. I would have to modify it somewhat due to the nature of my study, however, the core questions would be most helpful. Please let me know when you can – with sincerest regards, Sam Shipp

35610 Hamlet Court
Round Hill, VA 20141
540 338 4060 (H)
540 454 2606 (C)
540 751 2600 (W)
wsshipp@email.wm.edu
William.Shipp@lcps.org

August 15, 2020

|
Dr. Barbara Brady
4035 Ridgeview Lane
Hurricane, WV 25526

Dear Dr. Brady:

I am currently working on my dissertation and read your dissertation on student advisories. My dissertation is a program evaluation of a student advisory in a high school. The Teacher-Advisor Beliefs Survey (TABS) you created connects very well with my study. I believe you found this to be a valid and reliable instrument. This survey instrument for teachers, with some modifications to connect directly with our advisory, would be very useful. I am requesting permission to use your survey – please let me know if this is possible.

With my sincerest gratitude,

William S. Shipp
Principal, Woodgrove High School
Doctoral Candidate, The College of William and Mary

From: **Dr. Barb Brady** <dr.barbbrady@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 4:27 PM
Subject: Use of Teacher Advisor Beliefs Survey (TABS) survey
To: <William.Shipp@lcps.org>

I'm sorry for such a delayed reply. You are more than welcome to use the TABS survey as long as you credit Dr. John Carey and myself for the development of the instrument. I hope this delay has not caused you not to be able to use it.

[REDACTED]

Can you please share your survey results with me when you finish your study. Thanks so much!

--

Barb

Dr. Barb Brady, PhD
Founder/President, Inspiring Dreams Network, Corp.
Inspiring Youth to Find and Achieve their WHY

Owner, Learning Supports Consulting, LLC
www.learningsupportsconsulting.com
SUPPORTING TODAY'S SCHOOLS TO ENHANCE THE SUCCESS OF ALL STUDENTS

VITA

William Samuel Shipp

EDUCATION

William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA

Degree: Ed.D., Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership

May 2021

Master of Science in Education at Shenandoah University, August 2000

Bachelor of Arts in History at James Madison University, August 1992

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Social Sciences Teacher – Park View High School 1995-2000

Dean – Harper Park Middle School – 2000-2001

Assistant Principal – Harper Park Middle School – 2001-2005

Principal – Harper Park Middle School – 2005-2012

Principal – Woodgrove High School – 2012-Present

PRESENTATIONS

Presenter – Loudoun County Public School Principals – “Woodgrove High School – Creating a Positive Culture” – September 2014

Presenter – Schools to Watch Conference – “Maximizing Our Time During Hurricane Season” – June, 2010

Presenter – Loudoun County Public Schools - Aspiring Principals – “Using Data to Determine Your Path” - January, 2009

Presenter - National Staff Development Council – “Creating and Planning for Effective Professional Development” December, 2008

Presenter - Virginia Staff Development Council – “The Challenge: Creating and Planning for Effective Professional Development” October, 2007

Presenter – Loudoun County Public Schools Assistant Principal Seminar – “The Principal’s Interview” May, 06

RECOGNITIONS

2015 Virginia Student Councils Association Administrator of the Year

2016 Friends of Loudoun Mental Health Leadership Award